

**A MARVEL
MONTHLY**

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STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND COMICS

**The making of
LORD of the
RINGS**

**BODY SNATCHERS
DIRECTOR
SPEAKS**

**Roald Dahl's
TALES of the
UNEXPECTED**

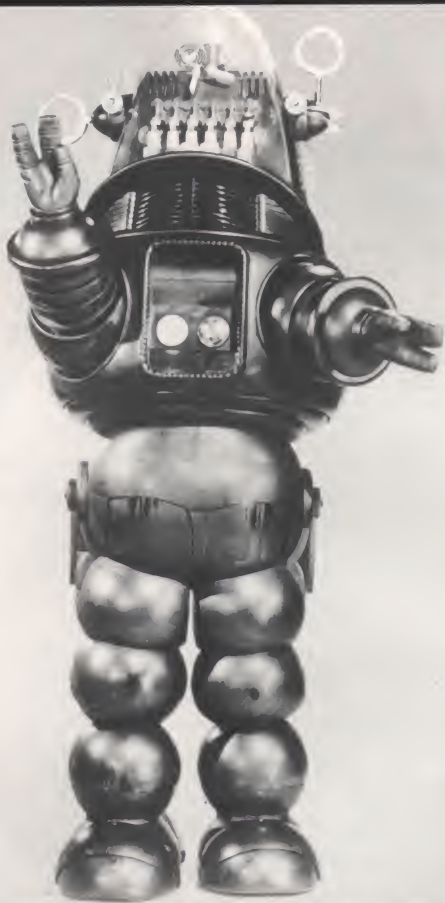
**FORBIDDEN
PLANET**

THUNDERBIRDS



special effects





Robbie the Robot, star of FORBIDDEN PLANET~see page 22.

STARBURST

SCIENCE FANTASY IN TELEVISION, CINEMA AND COMICS

Vol. 1, No. 9

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While there must be a limit to how much material can possibly be squeezed into a single issue of *Starburst*, we don't seem to have realized it yet!

Take a look at the contents listing on the right and you'll see what we mean!

Moving on to other things . . . one of the main topics of your letters concerns back issues. So, bowing to your demands, we have geared up our already overworked post department to handle mail order.

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Next month lots of inside facts on **Star Trek—the Motion Picture** supplied by Philip Kaufman and Persis Khambatta (the ex-director and bald-headed new crew lady) in exclusive interviews.

Be here!

here!

Dez Skinn

Dez Skinn

Dez Skinn/Editor.

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LORD OF THE RINGS

Feature by Alan Murdoch



Three Rings for the Elven Kings under the sky,
Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone,
Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die,
One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne
In the land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.
One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them,
One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them
In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.



Twenty five years ago the publication of a book by an English professor revolutionised the world of fantasy literature. The book was called *The Fellowship of the Ring* and was the first part of a projected trilogy *Lord of the Rings*. The author was John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, professor of English Language and Literature at Pembroke College, Oxford. His teaching interests were in the linguistic and literary fields of Anglo-Saxon and especially in such works as *Beowulf*, the *Arcene Wisse* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. Tolkien was also well-acquainted with old Celtic, Germanic and Icelandic manuscripts.

His first book concerning Middle Earth, *The Hobbit*, was published in 1937 and was met with resounding enthusiasm. But it would be 17 years before his fans would read another of his works. In 1954 the sequel to *The Hobbit*, a three-part work entitled *Lord of the Rings*, appeared. The three volumes, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* were released at nine month intervals and have since acquired a huge cult following.

Tolkien's works, concerned as they are with wizards, elves and strange creatures, seemed to be perfect candidates for screen treatment. Indeed the film rights have pas-

sed through such distinguished hands as Walt Disney, John Boorman and Stanley Kubrick before finally coming to rest with Ralph Bakshi.

With his first film, *Fritz the Cat*, Bakshi caused quite a stir on two levels. On one level the establishment was shocked that a film-maker could produce an animated cartoon film that would rate an x certificate. On another level Robert Crumb, who originally created *Fritz the Cat* for the underground comics of the late 1960s, and his purist followers were outraged that Bakshi could so twist the concept of Crumb's character. But Bakshi merely shrugged his shoulders. The film was a commercial success.

Born of Russian parents, Bakshi was raised in Brooklyn, New York and graduated from the High School of Industrial Arts in Manhattan with a cartooning medal. He was hired by Terrytoons, home of Mighty Mouse, shortly after his graduation and became the youngest animator in the history of the art. His rise was swift and he was running Terrytoons at the age of 26. After a short stint at Paramount's animation studio (during which time he handled the poorly-animated *Spider-Man* and *Fantastic Four* half-hour shows) Bakshi branched out to produce *Fritz the Cat*. This was followed

by the equally controversial *Heavy Traffic* which also rated an x-certificate. His next film, *Coonskin*, was plagued with poor distribution and has rarely been seen in this country. Then after a long gap, Bakshi shifted his sights away from social and political commentary that were so popular during the late sixties and plunged feet first into the worlds of fantasy with a film called *Wizards*.

Wizards, however, was not as far away from his previous films as first appears. While *Fritz* and *Heavy Traffic* have their roots firmly planted in the underground comic books of the late sixties *Wizards* owes more than a little to the fantasy orientated 1970s underground comics of Vaughn Bode. Unfortunately Bakshi's reputation as a producer of "adult" material had preceded him. *Wizards'* distribution was spotty in Britain and the film played in only a few selected cinemas.

It was with these credentials that Bakshi approached United Artists, owners of the film rights to *Lord of the Rings*, to see if he could succeed where so many other talented film makers had failed. Bakshi realised that the mistake of his predecessors was that they had tried to compress the gargantuan *Rings* trilogy into one film. He decided that to do justice to the story the adaptation would have to take the form of a two-part



film with a running time of at least four hours. He also realised that to try to make the film as live action would be a total disaster. He based his case for animation on the fact that "Tolkien asks us to suspend our disbelief, to accept the whole physical universe of Middle Earth, its history and its inhabitants. How can you create the concepts of all that in live action? Where do you get live action hobbits, elves and orcs? The answer is, of course, that you can't. Also, a live action version of *Lord of the Rings* would cost at least \$30 million!"

Bakshi turned to his long-time friend Saul Zaentz for help in the negotiations with United Artists for the rights to the

Rings trilogy. Prompted by his own love of the Tolkien books Zaentz was more than happy to involve himself with the project, and after the purchase of the rights by Zaentz and his Fantasy Films Company Bakshi was able to turn his attention to actually putting *Lord of the Rings* on celluloid.

The first drafts of the screenplay were written by a fan of the Tolkien books Chris Conkling. Then Fantasy/non-fiction writer Peter S. Beagle was brought in for revisions and final polishing of the script. Bakshi's instructions were to "become as 'Tolkien' as they could in remaining faithful to the books."

Armed with his new screenplay Bakshi

was able to begin shooting a live action version of the script. The idea was that this footage could be translated into animation by the huge team of animators and artists that Bakshi had gathered together. Bakshi had been building up his company over the years. Just before production began on *Lord of the Rings* his staff of artists and animators numbered just under the 100 mark. Within two months he had swelled their ranks to almost double that figure, hiring many art students from the Art Centre College of Design in Pasadena and the California Institute of the Arts. Bakshi soon headed the largest apprentice programme for animators in Hollywood.

It was during these early stages that

Opposite: *Baronir of Gondor, one of the Nine Companions on the Quest of the Rings. Below: Grima Wormtongue, evil lacky of Saruman the Wizard, weaves his web of deceit around King Theoden and Lady Eowyn.*



Bakshi achieved what he styles "a breakthrough" in animation. In fact the breakthrough is nothing more than tracing the animation cels over existing live action footage of actors decked out in rudimentary costumes. Though the technique required more in the way of backgrounds than the average animation film, the realism of the motion and figurework is supposed to be improved by the process. And for the first time on screen, audiences will see slow-motion animation. Another by-product of the process is that a higher "density of action" is possible than ever before. With most cartoon films rarely more than two or three characters are seen in frame together at any one time. Bakshi's process

makes it possible to animate entire battle sequences with casts of thousands and make the whole thing not only convincing but cheap!

The entire production was completed in less than three years, an incredibly short time for an animated feature of this length and scope. This period includes the filming of the live action version of the film on which the animation was based in Californian soundstages and on location in Spain. The Spanish location being used for the spectacular Helm's Deep battle sequence. Bakshi also spent several weeks in London recording the soundtrack for the film, which features a number of top British actors and the music of

Academy Award winner Leonard Rosenman.

Though *Lord of the Rings* does not open in Britain until July 5th this year, reports are already filtering through from America. US sources tell us that the film will be better appreciated by those who are already familiar with the *Rings* trilogy according to Tolkein. But whatever the result Bakshi must be applauded for at least attempting to commit the story to celluloid despite the adverse criticism heaped upon his earlier fantasy offering *Wizards* (see *Starburst* 2). Let's hope that *Lord of the Rings* fares better than its predecessor.

At last, we have our own Rod Serling... As a creator of short stories, he is wholly without equal in the world. He is renowned for always supplying the most unexpected sting in every tale. His name is Roald Dahl, Welsh-born of Norwegian parents 63 years ago, RAF fighter-pilot in Greece and Syria during the war, assistant air attaché in Washington in 1942, and thereafter "something in Intelligence" as they say. He's married to the American actress Patricia Neal (*Day the Earth Stood Still* etc) and helped bring her back from a speechless living death after a massive stroke which nearly killed her some years ago. He taught her to speak all over again and return to her career.

People who don't buy his books may know the Dahl name better from the script of Sean Connery's *You Only Live Twice*—or two big children's movie spectacles, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (based on his best-selling children's tome, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*). His friends and neighbours know him as an ardent cultivator of orchids—and a man who loves gambling.

For years, though, he has refused to gamble on his stories being churned out as quickie-television. True, he allowed Hitchcock to adapt two for the Master's own tv series. But no more. Many tv moguls had asked, but none were ever chosen by Dahl to do his stories *his way*... until he ran into Sir John Woolf, executive director of Anglia Television, at a cocktail party around Christmastime, 1976. Then it was Dahl who made the offer the producer couldn't refuse, not as per usual, the other way around.

"On the spur of the moment," recalls Dahl, "I said to him something I have scrupulously avoided saying to any other producers: 'How would you like to make a television series of all my stories?'"

Sir John leapt at the opportunity. "Roald Dahl must not only be the undisputed master of the twist in the tail, but in the quantity and quality of his stories capable of being dramatised to make exciting television, he must also be unique. When he gave me the opportunity of selecting up to 24 subjects from his distinguished output, I accepted with alacrity."

Dahl's tales are often gruesome, macabre and fantastical. "They're all a bit grim," he says, and laughs. "Actually, I admire Hans Christian Andersen much more than the brothers Grimm. Andersen is more sparkly. Grimm can be pretty grim, without being funny. I don't like anything for children, or indeed much for grown-ups, without a liberal sprinkling of humour or wit. My style is black humour." At times, very black.

He first began writing when working in Washington. Naturally enough for an RAF pilot (he finished the war as a Wing Commander), the first dozen works were



about flying, and published in an anthology called *Over To You*. His next collections came out as *Someone Like You: Kiss Kiss*; and *Switch Bitch*. Hitchcock apart, he has often been asked to sell out to tv. He always refused. So why the great change of heart now?

"I needed the money," he tends to reply, with a laugh. "I have been carefully hoarding them in the hope of finding the right person—a person I could rely upon to make a big series of the highest quality."

He could hardly have chosen better than Sir John Woolf. He's held a special responsibility for Anglia's drama output since the ITV combine was founded in 1959. But Sir John is, of course, fundamentally, a film man in Woolf's clothing. With his elder brother, James, Sir John formed Romulus Films in 1949, and made such classics as *The African Queen* with Bogart and Katie Hepburn in 1952, and Britain's breakthrough new-wave film,

Tales of the



Jack Clayton's *Room at the Top* in 1959. Following his brother's death in 1966, Sir John continued as a solo film producer—winning an Oscar for the *Oliver!* musical in 1968, and filming the first two Frederick Forsythe books, *The Day of the Jackal* and *The Odessa File*. Now he prefers to make tv shows—"they're pre-sold, you see!"

"Sir John seemed a decent chap," was the Dahl comment on their meeting. "There are so many people in films and tv who you cannot trust. They let you down. I don't think I mistrust any more people than most people do—it comes down to about 50% of everyone you meet, doesn't it?"

The much-applauded Dahl stories are perhaps more legend than legion. Counting six children's books, he's written but forty tales since the war. But they sell the world over in fifteen languages and are particularly popular in America. That's important,

you don't mess around with an expensive British tv series (the 24 half-hours will cost £1,500,000 in all) unless the American networks are interested. They were. They are. And so, Roald Dahl's *Tales of the Unexpected* came into being.

Discounting the wartime flying tales, Anglia bought rights for about 35 yarns, and selected 24 for the first batch—to run as two separate series in Britain, one complete series in the States. Dahl helped in the selection, and all the adaptations are carried out by leading English tv scribes (Ronald Harwood included) under Dahl's supervision and approval. And, for the icing on the cake, he introduces the show every week—in his perfected short and precise manner. (He's shooting a different set of introductions for the American series). Either way, this notion tends to make the show comparable to Rod Serling's sterling *Night Gallery*. It isn't; this is one story per episode. Better

stories, too!

One of the two which Hitchcock first made in the States, *Man From The South*, kicked off the series in Britain in March (directed this time around by Michael Tuchner). It was not, perhaps, the best of beginnings but for the next couple of months the 10pm date with Dahl became a regular Saturday night alternative for the non-soccer fraternity and Dahl fans, old and new.

Not all the tales work on the box. It's difficult at the best of times to dramatise the written word; with cleverly honed tales of the macabre, this is a greater problem. Dahl's style works best on the written page, or indeed read or acted on radio. Anglia, however, pulled out every stop to vault the recognised hurdles. Producer John Rosenberg collected a posse of topnotch writers and directors (including Herbert Wise, Christopher Miles), composer Ron Grainger, some rather 007-style credits

Unexpected!

Feature by Tony Crawley



Opposite top: Author Roald Dahl. Opposite below: Elaine Stritch sees eye to eye with her husband in *John and Mary*. Left: Jose Ferrer and Michael Ontkean in *Man from the South*. Above: A tearful Susan George reports her husband's untimely demise in *Lamb to the Slaughter*.

from Ted Taylor, and stars aplenty—from both sides of the pond. José Ferrer, Joseph Cotton, Katy Juado, Jack Weston, Elaine Stritch (superb in *William and Mary*), and Julie Harris (twice in fact) represent America, while the British contingent included a rare double-act from, of all combos, Sir John Gielgud and ... Joan Collins.

Sir John Woolf's favourite of the first batch of nine tales was the second Julie Harris item, *Way Up To Heaven*, which neatly closed the first series. His producer, John Rosenberg, simply favours them all!

Pert and pretty Susan George headlined the most memorable of all Dahl's works, the one Hitchcock leapt upon and first helped make into a classic on American tv: *Lamb To The Slaughter*. This is the only truly perfect murder story I've ever read. And I do mean, *perfect*! That it was not so perfect this time around was not Susan's fault. She was excellent; John Davies' direction was not tight enough, and Robin Chapman's script almost gave the game away when Det Sgt Brian Blessed shouted the word "meat!" It sounded almost like "meat" ... which is the crux of the murder. Wife bashes hubby over the head with a frozen leg of lamb, and while the police are ferreting about the place for the murder weapon, she calmly suggests they eat the meal she'd been cooking. A leg of lamb!

Roald Dahl says 007's creator, the late Ian Fleming, was really responsible for the story. They were dining with friends once in Vermont. The roast lamb was so appallingly dry. Fleming said: "She must have had this in the freezer for ten years. She ought to be shot!" Dahl suggested there must be a better form of punishment for her ...

After this opening set, John Rosenberg is already well into the throes of producing the next fifteen, when the actors will feature Derek (I, Claudius) Jacobi, Timothy (he, Edward VII) West, Gloria Grahame from Hollywood and return visits from both Sir John Gielgud and Susan George. Tragically, an eye-ailment has prevented Sir Alec Guinness filming his spot in the second series.

"I could probably sell a third series."



A distraught Jack Weston in *Dip In the Pool*.



Sir John Gielgud and Joan Collins in *Cryek*.

says Sir John Woolf, "if Roald would write one. He's not exactly prolific." A third set is still a distinct possibility, however, minus Dahl's imprint and, if Anglia can find them, unexpected tales from other writers.

Dahl does his best, though, writing (by hand) in a ramshackle brick-shed next to his orchid greenhouse, at the bottom of his Bucks garden. The orchids are better heated than he is. He makes use of an old

oil heater, and wraps his long legs inside a sleeping bag, as he prepares to frighten the world anew.

"I get my ideas at my desk," he explains. "Only a little germ comes beforehand then you sit down and slog it out. I just try to think myself into macabre situations. Dreams? Oh yes, I have lots of bad dreams. But I forget them ten minutes after. I can never use them in my stories."

And fears? What frightens Dahl the way he can scare us? "I was never frightened as a child, except by the dark—walking home alone in the dark and the wind, with the high trees moving in the wind. You get less frightened of things as you get older. Being frightened of anything, when you come down to it, is being frightened of death. The older you get, the less frightened of death you become. I was frightened in the war ... Very odd how you got used to it in the RAF when somebody didn't come back.

"I suppose people like being frightened for the same reason as I do. I write my stories because they tickle me. If they tickle anyone, I'm lucky."

1. *Man From The South*. Adapter: Kevin Goldstone-Jackson. Director: Michael Tuchner. Starring: José Ferrer, Katy Juado, Michael Ontkean, Pamela Stephenson, Cyril Luckham. Transmission: March 24, 1979.

Jose Ferrer (lost seen in films as Jules Verne's Capt Nemo) is the flamboyant figure goading young sailor Michael Ontkean (from Amy Irving's Voices) into an horrendous bet in Jamaica. Stakes are high: win a lush new car or lose a finger. Katy Juado has played the game before. And proves it ...

2. *Mrs. Bixby and the Colonel's Coat*. Adapter: Ronald Harwood. Director: Simon Langton. Starring: Julie Harris, Michael Hordern, Richard Greene, Vass Anderson, Will Lightfoot, Richard Hampton, Sandra Payne, Alan Chuntz, Frederick Farley. Transmission: March 31, 1979.

A peach of a story, even though we know it by heart ... After 143 Robin Hood is adventures, Richard Greene ends an affair with married Julie Harris with a mink coat. How to explain this gift to hubby Hordern without arousing suspicion? Why look, I found this pawnbroker's ticket. I wonder what it's for. Hubby finds out ... and his secretary is tickled pink!

3. *William and Mary*. Adapter: Ronald Harwood. Director: Donald MacWhinnie. Starring: Elaine Stritch, Marius Goring, Richard Hampton, Jane Paton, Jimmy Mack. Transmission: April 7, 1979.

"A very nasty tale," comments Dahl. So he laces it with wicked humour. Bullied wife Elaine Stritch is suddenly a widow, and finds her husband, "the greatest academic brain of his day" is still alive. He has bequeathed his brain to neurosurgeon Marius Goring. "I haven't told you about the eye. William wanted on ear as well, but ... It's his right eye. His field of vision is narrow." "It always was." Elaine says, rapidly finding revenge on hubby's old laws about no alcohol, tobacco, make-up or tv, by taking the brain and its assorted life-giving machinery home. "One man's experiment is another woman's husband."

4. *Lamb To The Slaughter*. Adapter: Robin Chapman. Director: John Davies. Starring: Susan George, Brian Blessed, Michael Byrne, Mark Jones, George Little, Hugh Cross, Andrew Fell, David English. Transmission: April 14, 1979.

The definitive perfect murder. Pregnant Susan George smashes policeman-hubby's skull with a

frozen leg of lamb when he's leaving her for another woman. Claiming to have found the dead body on returning from the shops, she calls the police. Det Sgt Blessed and others investigate. What—invited where—is the murder weapon? Susan induces the squad to stay for dinner.

5. *The Landlady*. Adapter: Robin Chapman. Director: Herbert Wise. Starring: Siobhan McKenna, Leonard Preston. Transmission: April 1, 1979.

Preston is delighted with new digs and friendly Irish landlady, Siobhan McKenna, until discovering her last guests signed in two years before. Why has no one stayed there since?

6. *Neck*. Adapter: Robin Chapman. Director: Christopher Miles. Starring: Joan Collins, Sir John Gielgud, Michael Aldridge, Peter Bowles. Transmission: April 28, 1979.

Great casting! La Collins, as the seductive Lady Turton, rules her husband with a rod of iron, flaunting her lovers in front of him and the servants. Sir Basil (Aldridge) and his disapproving butler (Gielgud) find an perfect opportunity for revenge.

7. *Edward The Conqueror*. Adapter: Ronald Harwood. Director: Rodney Bennett. Starring: Joseph Cotton, Dame Wendy Hiller. Transmission: May 5, 1979.

Dame Wendy takes in a strange cat, convinced it's the re-incarnation of Franz Liszt. Her husband (Joseph Cotton in his British ivy drama debut) feels threatened by the cat's extraordinary hold over his wife.

8. *Dip In The Pool*. Adapter: Ronald Harwood. Director: Michael Tuchner. Starring: Jack Weston, Gladys Spencer, Don Fellows, David Harries. Transmission: May 12, 1979.

Roald Dahl in gambling mood again ... returning to America by liner, Jack Weston (from Dick Lester's The Ritz) stakes everything in the traditional pool about how far the ship will travel by noon tomorrow. A sudden weather changes means he must slow the ship down ...

9. *The Way Up To Heaven*. Adapter: Ronald Harwood. Director: Simon Langton. Starring: Julie Harris, Roland Culver. Transmission: May 19, 1979.

Julie Harris as a married wife again; this time with a fear of unpunctuality. A trip to see her American grandchildren seems doomed with delays, and her husband (Culver), delights in adding to them ... until the obvious, unexpected finish.



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BRIAN JOHNSON

After covering *Alien*, *Empire Strikes Back* and *Space 1999* in the last issue of *Starburst*, we now talk to the man who forms a link between the three. His special effects has graced sf and horror films from *Day the Earth Caught Fire* to 2001.

Brian Johnson is one of Britain's most experienced special effects men. As well as the titles mentioned in this interview, his film work has included *Taste the Blood of Dracula*, *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth*, *Mosquito Squadron*, *Something to Hide*, *Nothing but the Night*, *The Blockhouse*, *The Tamarind Seed* and *Revenge of the Pink Panther*. His television work has also included several episodes of *Budgie*, *New Scotland Yard*, *On the Buses* and *Please Sir*.

Born in Surrey, Brian Johnson's ambition was to take up flying as a career, but he was wrongly advised against it on medical grounds. Instead, he got a job with a company making television commercials. After a time, he was promoted to the laboratory and, for 3½ years, he was a camera assistant on a variety of film documentaries and tv commercials. Then he became an assistant on feature films, but National Service interrupted this promising career.

He started in special effects on Hammer films, working at Bray Studios with the near-legendary effects expert Les Bowie. Then he moved onto the Gerry Anderson tv series *Thunderbirds* and joined Douglas Trumbull for the epic *2001*. He returned to the Gerry Anderson team—and to Bray Studios—as Special Effects Director on the *Space 1999* tv series. He is currently supervising effects on two Twentieth Century Fox films: *Alien* (see the special report in *Starburst* 8) and *The Empire Strikes Back*. John Fleming went to Bray shortly before Johnson left for California, where he was to prepare effects for *Empire*, due to start shooting in Britain during 1979. In the interview, Brian Johnson talks about his career, the problems faced by British special effects men, how he thinks those problems can be overcome and a surprise which the future may hold.

Interview conducted by John Fleming

Starburst: Why did you go into special effects?

Brian Johnson: I suppose because I liked playing about with chemicals and I liked models in one form or another. I'd been in the Royal Air Force for two years of National Service and when I came out I hadn't got a job. I was offered work on *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961). I was just an effects assistant, really. I organised a few bits and pieces for Les (Bowie). We were at Biggin Hill with aircraft: running up aircraft engines for wind. It was a very cheap picture and we couldn't afford to build machines. So we just built the sets out at Biggin Hill, lined up real aircraft and blew them all over. It worked quite well. I had actually helped

Brian Johnson worked with another master of special effects, Doug Trumbull, on *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).



Les before on a couple of Hammer films: *The Pirates of Blood River* and *Captain*

"Day the Earth Caught Fire was a very cheap picture. We couldn't even afford wind machines."

Clegg (US: *Night Creatures*). Then, after that, we did things like *The Phantom of the Opera*. They were all done here (at Bray) and on various sandpit locations.

Lots of British special effects men seem to have come up through Les Bowie's organisation.

Bowie Films. Well, I think that bred

about half the special effects technicians in this country. It started really, I suppose, in the early Sixties and then it gradually built up and built up until about 1969 and then it dwindled away because so many productions had folded up. There

"I think Les Bowie's organisation bred about half the special effects men in this country."

were about forty of us I suppose, all in all, at one time. All freelance but attached to Bowie Films. Then it just faded away.

How did you get involved with Gerry Anderson?

Well, Les also got involved with a chap called Derek Meddings (now handling effects on the James Bond films), who was working for a company called Anglo-Scottish Pictures. Les persuaded him to work for Gerry. And when Derek was there he asked if I would join him, which I did for a short while. I did about thirteen of the *Thunderbirds*.

What was your job?

I directed the special effects on the model work. But it was very repetitious. After a while, you didn't learn anything and I



Above: A flight of Eagle craft cruise above the harsh lunar landscape in *Space 1999*. Below: Thunderbird 2 banks into a turn from the highly successful Gerry Anderson tv show, *Thunderbirds*.



really don't like taking on jobs where you just repeat stuff you've done before.

So you went on to 2001. What was that like?
It was a whole different ball-game. An amazing amount of research went into it, so everybody learnt a lot. I worked with Doug Trumbull, mainly. But I was responsible for some of the models, one of the lunar landscapes and so on. No one person was really responsible for the whole thing.

"When I worked with Doug Trumbull on 2001, an amazing amount of research went into it, so every one learned a lot."

People went in and contributed to everything that was going on. It was a huge team. I built Tycho Base. When you see it on the big screen, it's let into another section of landscape and looks quite good, even on a fifty-foot screen. I used tiny bulbs and just a few bits of Airfix. Mainly it was plaster and soldered metal and other bits and pieces.

But Thunderbirds was cheaper...

Oh yes. Well, I mean, it really was Airfix kits and just like a sweatshop.

How long did you have per episode?

A week, I think it was. Maybe ten days. I can't remember.

Was that enough time to develop effects properly?

Not really. I'm glad that side of the industry is not with us any more. It's really exploitation of people's enthusiasm.

Yet you went back for Space 1999.

Well, I needed the money. And it was a

good opportunity to get in right at the beginning and influence that whole particular television series. I think we did. Unfortunately, when British people make television series for America, they seem to be relatively unsuccessful. And I think it's because their attitude is that everything must be tailored for the American market—and nothing really comes out of it that's believable. We were doing it for a company (ITC) that was trying to sell the series to American television. They're providing the money—they keep changing things you wouldn't necessarily want changed—one has to have American artists and American scriptwriters and American this and American that. And in the end it becomes a very dull, drab compromise on various situations. I just felt that there were areas that were lacking in a bit of . . . lacking in enthusiasm . . . and good concepts.

I've heard Gerry Anderson complain the problem was the American executives kept changing their minds about the format. One day they wanted monsters, the next human interest, the next hardware.

Absolutely. I think the production side was very efficient. We all got on very well together. But we had certain parameters which kept varying and you shouldn't really have that. You should have things very strongly defined on a television series. The format should really be adhered to strictly and should be sorted out long in advance.

Sunken changes were affecting you?

"When British people make television series for America, they seem to be relatively unsuccessful."

Yes, they were a bit. I mean, sometimes you have to say, "No, you can't have it. There's not enough time." They were asking for things like monsters and I was saying, "No. Because, when we shoot five shots a day, monsters are not the sort of thing you can create instantly." To just suddenly say, "We want monsters everywhere" . . . We did a couple of episodes with animals in where we scaled the sets so that the animals looked fairly large. But that's as near as we got to having actual monsters.

How long did you have to do the special effects for each episode?

Something like ten working days.

That's as short as for the Thunderbirds effects.

Yes, but the way I organised the shooting, we didn't work very much overtime, so we weren't that pushed. We worked a regular sort of 8.30 to 5.30 day. Sometimes we went on to 7.00 or 8.00 in the evenings, but not very often; and very rarely did we work at weekends.

Space 1999 presumably had a bigger crew than Thunderbirds, though?

Yes, but the situation was totally different.



"I directed the special effects on the model work for Thunderbirds, but it was very repetitious."



Opposite: *Thunderbird 1* is always the first to arrive at the scene of the disaster. Left: The underwater craft, *Thunderbird 4*, is carried around the world by *Thunderbird 2*. Right: The whole international rescue operation is coordinated by the satellite, *Thunderbird 5*.



Left: *Thunderbird 1*, as the command craft, is built for speed. Centre: Space disaster call for the services of the rarely-used *Thunderbird 3*. Right: As the transport craft of International Rescue, *Thunderbird 2* is built to carry the heavy and complicated machinery required by the team.



Thunderbirds was just . . . Well, it seems almost unreal now that we would have worked the hours we did. I mean, we worked eighteen hours a day sometimes—and seven days a week—because of the pressures that were put on us by the production.

Who was putting on the pressure—ITC?
I'd rather not say. It was just bad budgeting and scheduling, really. There has to be a

"Sometimes you have to say 'No you can't have that effect. There isn't enough time'."

time when somebody says, "No, we can't do this and we can't do that." We were much younger then. When people are young and relatively inexperienced, they do things that . . . Well, afterwards they turn round and think, "Oh, what a total waste of time."

You'd prefer not to work in tv again?
I don't mind. I really don't mind. Working in tv's quite fun. But, of course, they're quite long series. Things start repeating themselves in scripts . . . There's human

situations *vis a vis* man and woman. And there's human situations with respect to aliens—the *alien-human interface*. (Laughs) And things like dream sequences, nostalgia and that sort of thing. After you've spent one or two shows on those, you're back to square one again. It's always repetitious. With a television series, you've got ongoing characters and sometimes they are frightfully boring; the only thing that's missing are the strings on the shoulders.

What sort of budgets did you have?
Well, the special effects on *Space 1999* cost less than the ones on *UFO* and just think of the gap in time there was and how much inflation there was.

How did you manage it?

Well, I used different techniques to the ones that were used on *UFO*. We didn't have models on wires. We used lots of photographic cut-outs, so we didn't have to use huge sets: we just had cut-outs laid down and matched in fairly carefully. Lots of things like that made it much easier.

You didn't use any wires at all?

Well, very few. We tracked cameras rather than moved the models: that's how we got

all those very smooth movements. We added the star background afterwards. We did it all on one piece of original film so that we got original film quality, but we had a number of exposures on the one frame. Sometimes we did seventeen exposures on one piece of film. We didn't matte. By the time you've got the mattes done, it's two weeks. I was giving them the stuff the next day. And I think it worked admirably.

"With a television series you have ongoing characters and sometimes they are frightfully boring."

There obviously were compromises, but there have to be on television shows. If you're going to be a realist about television production, you've got to accept some "barely passable" shots occasionally. Provided there's quick-cutting and action, you'll get away with it.

Your explosions in Space 1999 were very realistic.

Well, we did them by shooting with the camera pointing vertically upwards. So

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the explosions moved out radially: so you didn't get a bang and everything suddenly fell in one direction as gravity took over. The gravity was present, but was bringing the explosion towards the camera.

Returning to the budget, how much did the special effects cost?

I can't really tell you. But I can tell you we did one show for NBC: a pilot called *The Day After Tomorrow*. That whole thing cost about £105,000 to make: a one hour (48 minutes) show, which meant

"We did the special effects for each episode of *Space 1999* in ten working days."

designing new craft and everything else. And our cost was about £25,000. So it was just under a quarter of the total budget.

Alien has a good budget, presumably.

Well, we have a very acceptable budget.

Right: A close-up of *Thunderbird 1*. Opposite top: A scene from the new sf blockbuster *Alien*. The crew of the *USCSS Nostroma* awaken early from their deep-space suspended animation. Opposite below: After landing on the surface of a mysterious planet the crew discover the remains of a long dead alien.



yes. I've got about twenty-odd people split into two units: a floor unit coping with all the floor effects over at Shepperton and a model unit here (at Bray) getting all the models ready for shooting.

*Can you talk about the effects you'll be doing on *Alien*?*

Not really, no. The story's basically seven

people on a spacecraft encountering a form of life which is totally opposed to that which we know. I'd really rather not say more than that because the script's in a fairly fluid state anyway. But it is very interesting. It's very gripping. I mean, it reads beautifully as a story.



*Are you affected by tailoring **Alien** to the American market, as you were on **Space 1999**?*

No, no. Not at all. That's the thing about feature films: you don't aim them at any particular market. One knows that the American market pays the biggest amount of money and it is basically American (production) money—well, it's 20th Century Fox, Europe. But it's a feature film about a science fiction subject and that's it. It's being directed by Ridley Scott, so it should be good.

*What about **Empire Strikes Back**?*

There's nothing I can really say about it yet. I'm Special Effects Supervising Director.

Working with...

I'm working for George Lucas. We have another director (Irvin Kershner) but George Lucas owns Star Wars Corporation with Gary Kurtz, so I'm working for George and Gary. The point is George has a very good idea of what he wants. He's a superb technician and, as much as anything, I'm there just to co-ordinate

everything and for him and I to work together and say *Why don't we do this?* and *Let's have a go at that* and *Wouldn't it be a good idea if* and that sort of thing. That suits me fine. Some people get very touchy about their special effects and highly... egotistical. But it should be part of a contribution to a team effort and the

"Some people get very touchy about their special effects and highly... egotistical."

film doesn't only rest on special effects. Everybody else pitches in and does their bit as well.

I believe it's considered relatively cheap to shoot in Britain.

We're not expensive by American or European standards. I mean, European standards are just totally unreal.

Why do British special effects men—and technicians generally—seem to be so highly-rated internationally?

I don't know, maybe it's something that suits the British frame of mind. Most of us enjoy our work: we don't regard it as just a means of providing money. Some countries seem to turn out technicians who are there just to do the job and that's it—whereas we tend to get somewhat enthusiastic about the work we're doing.

*When you're in America for **Empire Strikes Back** will you be using American technicians?* On the model shooting. You see, we're developing new equipment and it's fairly advanced technically and it requires very knowledgeable operatives: the majority of those come from California. You see,

"You've got to accept some barely passable shots sometimes. Provided there's quick-cutting and action, you'll get away with it."

California is where all the electronic equipment originates from—the innovations. That's not to say we won't eventually acquire the same sort of thing. If I have my way, we certainly will.

So you're going to America.

Only for a while, though. I don't know what I'll be doing after **Empire Strikes Back**. I may never make another special effects film.

That's hardly likely.

Really.

So what would you do instead?

Well, I'm really getting into the directing bit now. I mean, Doug Trumbull is now doing **Hiero's Journey** and it'll be his second film as a director.

Do you think you're liable to get finance in Britain for directing?

Well, I'm half-way there already.

In Britain?

Well, in the middle of the Atlantic somewhere.

The science fiction genre, like all subdivisions of cinema, has had its share of bad movies. Unfortunately there are more bad sf movies than there are good. But sometimes such films extend past the boundaries of sheer awfulness and become entertaining in their incompetence.

INVASION of the SPACE TURKEYS

Or . . .
The Attack of That, It, Them, Those, Lost Giant 50ft Hell Crab Monster Blob Creatures from Outer Space—on \$35 a day!



As a fan of the fantastic cinema, especially science fiction films, it is difficult to hold up one's head when confronted with: "How can you sit through all that junk?"

"Well, some may be bad," you reply, "but there have been a lot of very good science fiction films." Then you name about ten, off the top, and just manage to make it to fifteen or so. The realisation hits home . . . most sf films are pretty bad. No, they're awfully bad. In fact, some are so bad that they should be charged with manslaughter!

So when did those trashy sf movies actually begin? When did the \$35-budget quickie emerge? Answer: the 1950s. Fair enough, it is often said that 98% of everything is junk. When you think of *The Thing*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *Forbidden Planet*, etc., you actually remind yourself of that 2% of the top-grade stuff. But two is a frighteningly low percentage.

However, the reality of it all is that for

every *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* there are at least ten *Attack of the Giant Leeches*. Any science fiction movie fan would instantly recommend a "non-member" of the sf fraternity to go see, say, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. But how many, with a love and respect for a fellow human being, would suggest that anyone sit through *The Giant Claw*, which features the all-powerful story of a large chicken creature threatening New York. Or *From Hell It Came*, an absurd cross-pollination of sf and voodoo themes which result in a walking tree-stump?

Throughout the 1950s—sf cinema's "golden age"—the science fiction movie ran a steep downhill course. From the early years to approximately 1956, the sf movie industry appeared to almost achieve a certain intelligent balance, reaching a peak almost every year: *The Day the Earth Stood Still* and *The Thing* in 1951; *War of the Worlds* and *It Came from Outer Space* in 1953; *Them!* in 1954;

This Island Earth in 1955; *Forbidden Planet* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* in 1956.

But then the *doom* years of the late '50s offered sf fans the lowest possible trash, with 1957 being utterly mindless by way of sf material, and 1959 being just plain silly in all departments—the best year of absurdity, 1958, became literally the pits! Probably the most famous sf film to come out of '58 was *The Blob*. This little gem was such a hit that it spawned a sequel . . . thirteen years later! Of course, the sequel, *Son of Blob* (also known as *Beware! The Blob*), wasn't a scratch on its illustrious ancestor. *The Blob*, basically, is an alien entity that lands on Earth inside a meteorite. It is discovered by an old hermit, who pokes at it once or twice with a stick and causes the meteorite to crack in half, releasing a red, gooey substance (alarmingly resembling seedless strawberry jam) which sets about devouring the old guy—in the logical Hollywood tradition. The great

devouring scene takes place in a small-town doctor's surgery, where the poor old feller gets delivered by teenagers; the red, gooey stuff eats the old man while he lies on a surgery table and, due to its newly increased size, falls off the table and proceeds to crash around the surgery, knocking over bottles and lamps before the characters in the adjoining room begin to get curious about the noise. The exciting part comes when they all rush into the surgery, fail to notice a red blob worth its

weight in old hermits, and wonder where the old guy got to. Needless to say, the title character makes its getaway. This was merely the beginning of the film, and essentially set the pattern for the rest of the movie.

Now who in their right minds could take this film on any serious, dramatic level? Okay, so the special effects were sort of interesting, but the film, in all other departments, was abysmal. If Howard Hawks could make *The Thing* almost

believable. Don Siegel involves you in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, etc., what went wrong with *The Blob*? The answer is simple: the human element, the central characters, are about as convincing in their roles as Tom and Jerry would be in *Hamlet*. One has enough difficulty sustaining belief, a temporary acceptance of the absurd, in the invading creature/monster/blob cycle—but when you can't believe in the human characters because they don't conform to the human reactions one normally expects, then the whole film becomes totally unacceptable.

The cheapo sf movie that everyone was churning out during the late '50s needed nothing more than a guy in a space-suit or a scaly costume confronting a group of people who were more stupid than helpless, in either a remote region or in a confined area.

It! *The Terror from Beyond Space* makes a fine example of corner-cutting in all departments. The story concerns a space ship on its way back from Mars to America containing a monsier stowaway Martian — 'IT' of the title. At first, the crew of the ship are somewhat incredulous of IT's existence, but pretty soon they make a major discovery . . . IT, a rubbery beast brandishing a permanent snarl, is on board. One look at IT and everything is



Opposite: In the grim climax of *Invasion of the Hell Creatures* (1957, aka *Invasion of the Saucer Men*) a gang of teenagers save the day by melting the monsters with the headlights of their cars. Above left: The title star of *It! The Terror from Beyond Space* gazes down at a victim. Above right: A youthful Sieve McQueen and Aneta Corseaut hide from *The Blob* (1958). Top: In this scene from *Beware the Blob* (1971) Robert Walker looks suitably terrified as the monster advances but Gwynne Gillford dozes off.

thrown into action—gas, electricity, explosive charges, and guns. Eventually, after all attempts have failed to de-snarl the beast, the crew zip up their space suits and pull the plug out on the ship's oxygen, killing the snarling, oxygen-breathing Martian monster. The films are as simple as that, and as silly as that. The filmmakers appear to work purely on the presumption that their likely audience consists of idiots who all share one second-hand brain between them. With these sort of films, the ad art and the title is intended to pack 'em in—and little else seems to matter to the producers.

The fault with the majority of sf films which feature either a creature or space travel comes from the script stage. When the screenplay is badly constructed around an equally bad story, then no amount of special effects or directorial skill can save it.

The monster sf films follow a simple, clear-cut pattern. The giant monster is either revived or created—*The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms* is revived by atomic testing, and the giant ants in *Them!* are created by atomic radiation—and it immediately sets off to chew up the nearest lighthouse or stomp over the largest city. There are, of course, a few "mysterious" moments before everyone gets wise to the monster—ships strangely disappear, lighthouses mysteriously collapse, aircraft spot flying claws, and flocks of scientists are puzzled when they make plaster-casts of giant mantis, ant, or dinosaur prints. At this stage, a handsome military man, scientist or reporter goes out to look for whatever it was that ate the lighthouse, ship or aeroplane. This is the part that usually offers a near miss with the rampaging beast...

Ken Tobey, in *It Came from Beneath the Sea*, sails his submarine around the Pacific in search of "something" unusual and eventually glimpses a squid the size of Brighton. Edmund Gwenn in *Them!* is out looking for a clue to the "thing" that's been munching on sugar and policemen in a desert region when we see two fifteen-foot antennae peeping over a sand dune behind him. Following this interlude, the monster makes a break for it and heads directly for the nearest famous landmark, and destroys half of it before the military arrive and destroy it by some remarkably simple method after their greatest barrage of fire-power appears to have failed.

New York City seems to have suffered a lot this way—but Japan takes the prize for bad luck, having enormous monsters of all shapes and sizes use the country as a regular footpath.

Looking at individual productions, the awards for sheer unrestrained absurdity go out to five films, all of which are the ultimate insult to audiences. The first one comes from the Lippert company and is called *Lost Continent*. Made in 1951, its relation to science fiction is almost trans-





Above: *Invasion of the Hell Creatures* boasted little green men from space who overcome their victims by injecting alcohol into the bloodstream by way of hypodermic fingernails! Below left: *The alien in The Twonky* (1953) inhabited a tv set belonging to Hans Conried. Bottom left: *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957) featured intelligent giant crabs in the starring role.

parent; the plot tells of an atomic-powered rocket which is lost somewhere in the South Pacific during a test flight. Six characters are sent to recover it—but their plane crashes in the jungle. Needless to say, all emerge unharmed from the plane. Luck being still on their side, they just happen to bump into a native girl who shows them to a sacred mountain. Taking a short hike up and over the mountain, they come to a —yes, you guessed it— a mysterious valley. It hardly makes up for the exaggeration of the film's title, but due to the valley resting on a vast uranium deposit—quickly pointed out by some smart alec scientist character—the valley has preserved a prehistoric condition. No sooner recognised as “prehistoric”, one of the alert characters delights everyone by remarking that “These are brontosaurus tracks.” This automatically leads them face to face with one of the (mechanical) beasts. They also hit upon a couple of pterodactyls, locate the rocket, manage to get a couple of their group killed, and vamoose before—quite conveniently—the entire effects department blows up in a series of earthquakes and explosions. This film is too “rare” for its own sake.

Next in the hall of foolishness we have *The Twonky*, made in 1953. Possibly one of the most unusual films ever made, the title character is a television set. A university professor's wife, preparing to leave for a few days, accounts for herself by

presenting her husband with a TV set to keep him company while she's gone. It turns out that the set is inhabited by an alien called the Twonky—which whizzes around the professor's house like a crab and does the housework. The TV set, in its pathetic way of being helpful, lights cigarettes, cleans the floor, makes money, and even phones up women for its master. The professor repays it for all its help by calling in the police and a football team, who immediately tear in and kick it, launch a hatchet attack on it, and try to drive it off a cliff. Eventually, however, the professor manages to destroy it, along with the television set. There is absolutely *nothing* anyone can say about this forgotten masterpiece.

If you thought *Lost Continent* sounded the bad one of its kind, let's take a look at 1955. *King Dinosaur* offers an expedition by four scientists to a new planet that appears in close proximity to Earth. On landing, the scientists are in luck because the planet's atmosphere is just like Earth's. A couple of these lucky people set off and discover a lake, with an island stuck out in the middle of it. They get to the island and meet some of the exiles from *Lost Continent*, who immediately put on a show of aggressive dinosaur behaviour by battling each other to the death. More luck, because this allows the scientists to get clean away. As a final token of scientific respect for

prehistoric animal life they blow up the entire island with a convenient atom bomb, and then head for home. For any sf buff unfortunate enough to catch this one, your stomach will really turn about the acts of scientific vandalism that fill the screen at the end.

An incomparable “classic” in its own domain, *The Invasion of the Hell Creatures* has moments where it is just impossible to hold back your laughter. Dwarfish green figures with cabbage-like heads spill out of a space craft near a teenagers' hangout called, unimaginatively, Lover's Point. The little green men have a deadly weapon to aid them in their takeover bid for Earth. They inject alcohol into the veins of potential victims through hypodermic fingernails. Presumably humans are easier to dispose of drunk than sober!

The gang of fun-loving teenagers become involved when they roar down a country road in their hot-rod and accidentally flatten one of the little cabbage-men. However, the creature's body vanishes, leaving only its odd-looking hand to crawl about and make the girl shriek. Acting in the highest tradition of human logic, the cops then pin a murder rap on the teenagers after they've heard all about the little green man. But eventually all is “rectified” when the Lover's Point gang get together in their hot-rods, surround the aliens, and blast the little fellows with their car head-lamps—gleefully watching as the light dissolves the aliens. *Invasion of the Hell Creatures* is, by today's standards, slightly dated but nevertheless guaranteed not to disappoint cynics with its lack of style and poor effects.

The last of the landmark five, *Attack of the Crab Monsters*, may at first sound like an in-joke, but don't be fooled. Although sporting the producer-director credits of Roger Corman, the photography of Floyd Crosby, and the music of Ronald Stein, this jewel of the Z-grade division is worthy of a special award for enabling the viewer to experience, first hand, the sensation of rigor mortis. The plot deals with the investigation of a lost expedition (again) on a Pacific island, which is disappearing due to landslides. These landslides are caused by subterranean explosions—all of which are the work of crabs . . . 25-foot mutant crabs. As it turns out, the crabs eat people and assimilate knowledge in their brains. Due to this, the crabs are also able to talk. However, they don't get to say too much before they are all wiped out by the humans who they haven't eaten.

These five hold the top positions in sheer, outright audience abuse and insults. The jury, however, is still deliberating over *Astounding She Monster*, *Night of the Blood Beast*, *Attack of the Giant Leeches*, *The Killer Shrews*, *Attack of 50-Foot Woman*, *Cat Women of the Moon*, and *The Terrible Hiss Man* before they pass sentence!

Feature by Tise Vahimagi

Of all the great science fiction films of the past, the movie with perhaps the most profound effect on subsequent screen offerings of sf has to be *Forbidden Planet*. A retrospective look at this lavish MGM film from 1956 continues our popular "classics" series.

FORBIDDEN PLANET

Feature by Phil and
Leone Edwards



By 1955 when MGM's lavish sf masterpiece *Forbidden Planet* went into production, the cycle of fifties science fiction movies was already winding down and with a few exceptions, had degenerated to shoddy sequels and features of little more than programmer status. *Forbidden Planet* remains that rare thing from this period—an intelligent science fiction fantasy with a literate script, good performances, superb special effects and of course, Robby the Robot probably the best-known robot prior to the introduction of C3PO and R2D2 in *Star Wars*. In fact, when *Forbidden Planet* opened to universally

good notices, it was Robby and the special effects that garnered the highest praise, exactly as those of *Star Wars* did twenty-two years later.

Set in the year AD2200, *Forbidden Planet* tells the story of a rescue expedition to Altair 4 by the *United Planets Cruiser C-57D*, to discover the fate of a previous mission to the planet twenty years before. They find that there are only two survivors, Dr Morbius (Walter Pidgeon) and his pretty daughter, Altaira (Anne Francis). Morbius tells Commander Adams (Leslie Nielsen) that the other members of the Bellerophon expedition all died mysteri-

ously. The Doctor is reluctant to leave Altair 4 and grudgingly plays host to the crew of C-57D. When a strange invisible force sabotages the ship, the would-be rescuers are delayed further as repairs are carried out with the help of Morbius' robot, Robby. The robot, fortunately, has the ability to manufacture everything from a cup of coffee and a diamond studded dress to the several tons of lead sheeting that are needed to complete repairs. Commander Adams further complicates matters by falling in love with the astonishingly naive Altaira. Morbius, concealing his irrational jealousy at the



Commander Adams (Leslie Nielsen) tries to convince Professor Morbius (Walter Pigeon) to leave Altair IV. Altaira (Anne Francis) looks on in disapproval, Robby the Robot ignores all three.

attention paid to his daughter, tells Commander Adams about the remains of the great civilisation he has discovered on Altair 4—the civilisation of the Krels. So technically advanced was this race that centuries after its destruction the great machines it had devised to control the planet were still working. In a breathtaking extravaganza of special effects, Morbius takes Commander Adams and Lieutenant "Doc" Ostrow (Warren Stevens) on a guided tour of the Krel complex which extends deep into the heart of the planet. He shows them the "brain booster", a machine designed by the Krels to test and heighten the IQ of their children. This machine, designed as it was for five year olds, also produces moving holographic images, evidently for the amusement of the children who operated the machine. As the plot unfolds it becomes apparent that the invisible monster that has sabotaged the ship and was responsible for the deaths of the original expedition members is a manifestation of Morbius' id, produced directly by his experiments on the brain booster. The "Id Monster" makes further attacks on the crew, finally attacking Morbius, Altaira and Adams in Morbius' house. The monster burns its way through Krel metal doors, and Morbius finally faces it alone, allowing Adams, Altaira and Robby to escape. Altair 4 is destroyed, and United Planets Cruiser C-57D makes it way back to Earth.

Forbidden Planet originated as a story by Irving Block and Allen Adler, called *Fatal Planet*. Adler was from a family of actors and had sold many tv scripts during the early fifties. Block, on the other hand,

featured Robby the Robot, **Monster From Green Hell** (1957), **Pied Piper of Hamelin** (1957 television movie), **Viking Women and the Sea Serpent** (1957), **Kronos** (1957, one of the most interesting and intelligent of the fifties low budget alien invasion films), **War of the Satellites** (1958), **The Giant Behemoth** (1958, in which he worked with King Kong's creator, Willis O'Brien) and **Atomic Submarine** (1958, in which Block's arm and hand were made up as the sea monster!). He is today a Professor of Art at California State College and teaches courses in various subjects from anatomy to video tape expression.

Block and Adler were going to offer **Forbidden Planet** to one of the smaller studios, Allied Artists, who at the time were developing other science fiction properties like **Invasion of the Body Snatchers**, but the writers' agent suggested they offer it to one of the big studios, so in the Spring of 1954 Block and Adler went along to see Nicholas Nayfack at MGM. Nayfack, who was the nephew of Nick and Joseph Schenk, had been a production executive at Metro since 1936 and had produced his first film **Border Incident** in 1949. Nayfack was



Morbius introduces his daughter, Altaira, to the Commander and officers of the United Planets Cruiser C-57-D, the first young men she has ever met.

was a special effects technician who also had some writing credits. He had worked on **Unknown World** (1950), **Rocketship X-M** (1950), **Flight to Mars** (1951), **Captive Woman** (1952) usually in collaboration with Jack Rabin. Following **Forbidden Planet** he continued in the science fiction field with Rabin and among his later credits are such fondly remembered B classics as **Invisible Boy** (1957) which also

interested in **Forbidden Planet**, but rather than read the two writers' script, he asked that they tell him about it. Block acted the story out in Nayfack's office, but the producer couldn't understand the concept of an invisible monster. Block replied quickly "That's the point. When you see something it's not half as frightening as your imagination." Nayfack was intrigued

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WARREN STEVENS AND ROBBY, THE ROBOT
DIRECTED BY
FRED MCLEOD WILCOX · NICHOLAS NAYFACK

PRODUCED BY
CINEMASCOPE AND COLOR

WITH MUSIC BY ANDRE BUCK
AND KENNETH

EDITED BY
EASTMAN COLOR

A METRO GOWEN MAYER PICTURE

by the idea and was finally sold on the concept when Block pointed out that an invisible monster would cost nothing to create. As Block went on "You could have thousands of them." As the production went on however, the idea of a completely invisible monster was dropped and a vague outline of a giant lion-like creature was added later by Joshua Meador of the Walt Disney Studios.

Despite opposition by the New York Office of MGM, Nayfack bought the property from Block and Adler and hired Cyril Hume to write the screenplay. Hume was used to writing about unusual subjects, having penned several *Tarzan* scripts. Veteran MGM director, Fred McLeod Wilcox was signed to direct. Wilcox had joined MGM's Publicity Department in 1929 and had worked his way up from there, discovering both Lassie (*Lassie Come Home*) and Elizabeth Taylor (*National Velvet*) along the way. *Forbidden Planet* was to be his only fantasy film.

Forbidden Planet was allotted a budget of \$1,900,000, probably one of the biggest budgets afforded a science fiction film from a major studio at that time, Metro's attitude being that if they were going to enter the sf field, then they were going to do it in a big way.

The special effects were designed under the supervision of A. Arnold Gillespie who worked at MGM for a total of forty years, winning four Academy Awards for special effects. Gillespie considered *Forbidden Planet* his most satisfying effects job. In an interview in 1974 he recalled how Robby the Robot had been created. "I felt that most robots in science fiction movies had looked like a man in an aluminium suit. They all seemed the same and I decided we ought to find a different kind of robot. I happened to think of the beautiful shape of the potbellied stoves of my youth. So Robby was designed basically from an old potbellied coal burning stove." Robby was much more than a man in a suit. Cinematographer George Folsey described his workings like this: "The robot's massive body was motivated by six electric motors, and was controlled through a complicated switchboard panel. He had complete mobility of arms, legs and head. More than two months of trial and error labour were required to successfully install the 2600 feet of electrical wiring that made the robot independent and self-operating". It was thought for a long time that Robby was indeed a real robot; he was however, operated from the inside by a man who was required to learn the complex panel that controlled all the various movements. Operating the robot was an unpopular job, due mainly to the heat and claustrophobic conditions inside the tin man, and several people were used in this capacity. The voice of Robby was provided by



Above: Commander Adams (Leslie Nielsen) tests the force field around his space-ship he has set up to ward off attacks by the mysterious saboteur. Below: The United Planets Cruiser C-57D, skims gracefully across the forbidding surface of Altair IV.



well-known announcer Marvin Miller.

Robby was active in films and tv for years, most notably in the 1958 MGM film *The Invisible Boy*, in which, linked to a computer, Robby becomes the villain. The film was a low budget affair, and despite some interesting effects by Irving Block, is remembered for little else than the presence of Robby. His television appearances include *The Thin Man* TV series, *the Perry Como Show*, two episodes of *Lost in Space* (*War of the Robots* and

Condemned of Space) and *Columbo*. Robby is now on display at Movie World in Buena Park, California.

Production went ahead on *Forbidden Planet*. Under Cedric Gibbons' supervision, the sets were designed by Edwin B. Willis. Morbius' home is a big open-plan style house, constructed from glass, plastic and Krel stone. The exterior of United Planets Cruiser C-57D is that of a flying saucer, as UFOs were still very much in the news and the public conscious-



After experimenting with the Krell brain-boosting device, Lt. Doornik collapses into unconsciousness. Prompted by this interference Morbius warns Commander Adams that unless he leaves the planet, disaster will follow.

ness in the mid-1950s. Scientists at Cal Tech approved of the interior designs of the ship's bridge and crew quarters. Cinematographer Folsey recalls the problems with shooting scenes that contained so much light reflective material. "Much of the set material was highly reflective with the result that we continually picked up reflected light around and behind people. We neutralised it by studied placement of set-lighting units. When it came to shooting scenes in the cabin of the ship we encountered a fresh new batch of problems. The cabin was a maze of radar screens and luminous dials, blinking and vibrating. We had to carefully control our lighting here so that some instruments would not shine too brightly while others would shine through the darkness and not be lost on the screen." Folsey had also photographed one of the earliest science fiction films, *The Man From Mars*, in 1922 in New York's Biograph Studios. Interestingly, this pioneering film was shot in an early version of 3D.

Shot in colour and cinemascope, *Forbidden Planet* was made entirely in the studio, utilizing giant painted backdrops or "cycloramas." The planet surface cyclorama was a huge painting measuring a mammoth 350 feet from one end to the other. The effect is that the film exudes a strange dream-like quality unequalled in its otherworldly imagery. The atmosphere of Altair 4 is swirling green and there are two moons in the sky. After United Planets Cruiser C-57D sets down and the crew disembarks we see in the distance a small dust storm moving across the horizon. It rapidly approaches the foreground and is, in fact, Robby in a jeep-like vehicle coming to welcome the visitors on

behalf of Morbius, and to transport them to the planet's only inhabitants. Against the huge cyclorama of the planet's sky and surface, it is a powerful and fanciful image. This "look" was created by art director Cedric Gibbons, head of MGM's art department and winner of eleven Academy Awards.

The basic plot is hardly original though, based as it is on Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The characters are taken directly from the play; Prospero is Morbius, and his daughter, like her *Tempest* counterpart Miranda, has never seen another man apart from her father. Robby is an amalgamation of two characters, Caliban and the spirit Ariel, weaver of spells and magic (seen in Robby's ability to manufacture various elements from gems to whiskey for the comic relief ship's cook, played by Angie Dickinson's Police Woman partner Earl Holliman). The crew are the Italian noblemen who visit Prospero's island which of course, is Altair 4. The idea of using a monster from Morbius' id played on the then-current interest in Freudian psychology.

Rather than use an orchestral score, Schary enlisted the aid of electronic music experimenters, Lou and Bebe Barron. They had been experimenting with the possibilities of tape recorder circuitry and feed-back since 1947 when they had received a prototype synthesiser machine for a wedding present. From 1949 they had added the electronic noises to a series of experimental films, including one called *The Bells of Atlantis*. Schary had met the Barrons at an art gallery that was holding an exhibition of his wife's paintings. Intrigued by the possibilities of the new sound medium he invited them to the studio

to hear some of their tapes. He was impressed and the Barrons "composed" the electronic score for the film. Fearing problems from the Musicians' Union, the Barrons received the credit "Electric Tonalities" in the film.

Forbidden Planet was previewed as a rough cut to an ecstatic response and was immediately released in this form. Surprisingly the somewhat stilted editing of this version adds to the overall dream-like quality of the film. *Forbidden Planet* received almost unqualified praise. The American Film Industry "bible", *Varley*, said of it, "Imaginative gadgets galore, plus plenty of suspense and thrills make it a top offering in the space travel category." The staid *Monthly Film Bulletin* offered "... an enjoyably thorough going space fantasy." *Time Magazine* "... "A nifty interstellar meller." Leonard Moseley in the *Daily Express*, "... triumphantly entertaining ... its effects are beautifully done." *The News Chronicle* "... an altogether splendid film which presents us with an unusual Freudian slant on science fiction." Harold Conway in the *Daily Sketch*, "... 90 minutes of the most glorious balderdash ever screened."

None of the critics, however, could foresee the profound effect the film would have on the screen of that would follow over the years. The crew of the starship *Enterprise* were a slightly less exuberant version of the C-57D crew. And Robby the Robot was to shape the personalities of mechanical men from the *Lost In Space* Robot to the fussy and vaguely irritating manner of *Star Wars* star C-3PO.

All in all *Forbidden Planet* was an important contribution to screen science fiction, and the genre would have been all the poorer for its absence.

Forbidden Planet (1956)

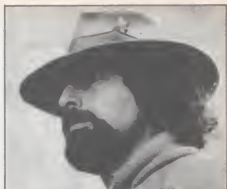
Walter Pidgeon (*Dr. Maribus*), Anne Francis (*Altair Morbius*), Leslie Nielsen (*Commander Adams*), Warren Stevens (*Lt. Doornik*), Jack Kelly (*Li Farman*), Richard Anderson (*Chief Quinn*), Earl Holliman (*Cook*), George Wallace (*Bosum*), Bob Dix (*Gre*), Jimmy Thompson (*Youngerford*), James Drury (*Strong*), Harry Harvey (*Randall*), Roger McGee (*Lindsrom*), Peter Miller (*Moran*), Morgan Jones (*Nichols*), Richard Grant (*Silvers*).

Directed by Fred McLeod Wilcox. Screenplay by Cyril Hume from a story by Irving Block and Allen Adler. Photographed by George J. Folsey. Sets by Edwin B. Willis and Hugh Hunt. Makeup by William Tuttle. Art direction by Cedric Gibbons. Edited by Ferris Webster. Costumes by Helen Rose and Walter Plunkett. Special effects by A. Arnold Gillespie, Warren Newcombe, Irving G. Ries and Joshua Mendor (through courtesy of Walt Disney Productions), Electric tonalities (music) by Louis and Bebe Barron. Produced by Nicholas Nayfack. Colour by Eastman Color. CinemaScope. An MGM Presentation.

Time: 106 mins (Re-release time: 98 mins).

PHILIP KAUFMAN SPEAKS!

Interview conducted by
Tony Crawley



Far better received, and deservedly so, than most re-makes, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*—an alternative view of the Jack Finney novel—owes much to director Philip Kaufman. He's a science fiction buff, and one of the merry, bearded band of San Franciscan filmmakers currently creating the bulk of American screen hits these days: Francis Coppola, George Lucas, Michael Ritchie, John Korty, Carroll Ballard. Finally, it's Kaufman's turn to have a massive hit. His new kudos is well-deserved. As well as widening the scope of the original film—by reverting to the book and researching deeply into genetics and sociobiology with co-writer W. D. Richter—he has deftly added new areas, indeed auras, to the nightmare tale.

Chicago-born Kaufman spent much of his youth teaching maths in Florence, English in Salonika, driving kibbutz tractors in Israel and trying to make a go of being a novelist. His Euro-travels were well-timed: around 1961 saw the start of Truffaut, Godard and the new wave cinema. "There were a couple of American movies I saw too, Shirley Clarke's *The Connection* and John Cassavetes' *Shadows* which made me suddenly say: Hey! It's not all *Pillow Talk*!" *Shadows* in fact has probably turned more Americans to directing than even Roger Corman, and one of its stars, Lelia Goldoni, appears in *Body Snatchers*. (So does her husband, Tom Luddy, who runs the Pacific Film Archive, San Francisco's answer to the British Film Institute. They both play Pods.)

Kaufman's first film, *Goldstein*, was a wild, comedy fantasy starring two of Chicago's famed Second City improvisational comedy troupe: Severn Darden, Anthony Holland. "A lot of people said it was done in terrible taste, others told them to shut up, saying it was terrific. When it was shown at Cannes, it got great reviews but fights were breaking out over certain comical abortion sequences. Even the local nuts were throwing punches. A kinda wild moment!"

The film had cost a mere \$40,000, but it was good enough to share the critics prize at the 1963 Cannes festival, which helped Kaufman raise \$100,000 for *Frank's Greatest Adventure*—Jon Voight's 1965 debut. The Second City boys were featured again, plus another star from *Shadows*, Ben Carruthers. The film was pop-art, campy before its time, and as one critic-cum-fan reported, its comedy filming "was so right it was beyond the comprehension of... Hollywood." Retitled *Fearless Frank*, it was finally released in 1969 in a double-bill with Dustin Hoffman's more embarrassing first film, *Madigan's Millions*.

The comedy impressed University enough to give Kaufman a contract. He worked on a number of projects before his Hollywood debut in 1972 with a stunning revaluation of the Jesse James legend, *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid*, with Cliff Robertson as Cole Young and Robert Duval as Jesse. (Duval is another close pal of Kaufman, and has a tiny, uncredited cameo

in *Body Snatchers*).

Kaufman's next feature came out in 1976, *The White Dawn*, a rather amazing and, at times almost galactic-looking view of Arctic and Eskimo life and times, starring Lou Gossett, Warren Oates and Timothy Bottoms. We barely saw this fine movie in Britain, although it ran in some U.S. cities for 26 weeks straight. Despite Kaufman's being dropped by Clint Eastwood from *The Outlaw Josey Wales*, *The White Dawn* was more than enough to encourage Gene Roddenberry and Paramount to sign him to helm their on-off-on *Star Trek* movie plans. Come May '77, *Trek* was off yet again. Phil Kaufman, fortunately, had two other sidelines to fall back on: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and the yet-to-be-seen, *The Wanderers*, which really started the current gang movie cycle. (Kaufman announced his first film, and wrote it with his wife, Rose; everyone else beat him into the cinemas).

Producer Robert H. Solo (*The Devils*) decided to re-make Don Siegel's much-loved and hotly-debated 1956 of classic. Solo spent much of his own money and two years' work in securing all the variously entangled rights to the property, before fixing up his deal with Warner Brothers. W. D. Richter (*Dracula*) was developing the script with Kaufman when it happened again. The studio's new production chief axed his predecessor's project. Kaufman saved the day. His former agent, Mike Medavoy, was a vice-president at United Artists and took over the deal 36 hours after finishing the scenario. Between them, Solo and Medavoy brought in Donald Sutherland (another ex-Medavoy client); Kaufman brought a long his new pal from his *Star Trek* period, Leonard Nimoy—plus new-comers Brooke Adams, from Terrence Malick's *Days of Heaven*, Veronica Cartwright, from *Hillcock's The Birds*, and Ridley Scott's much-awaited new *British* of number, *Alien*, and the Robert Altman regular, Jeff Goldblum. Their special effects team included the *Star Wars*' Oscar-winning sound expert, Ben Burtt.

Then, just as the film was sailing through post-production and effects, the entire United Artists production chiefs quit en masse and formed their own outfit, Orion. As proved by the Warners' experience, new production personnel are almost guaranteed to hate that which their predecessors set up. In Kaufman's case, they were tickled pink. *Body Snatchers* was just the ticket for their Christmas 1978 release, since his pal Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* was delayed yet again.

The critics have since agreed with Kaufman's treatment, as well. They couldn't very much say otherwise. Considering the original film's director, Don Siegel—and his star, Kevin McCarthy—both gave their seal of approval to the new version by appearing in cameo roles. They both believed in Phil Kaufman; and now it seems, so will Hollywood. It's about time.

Starburst: *The new Body Snatchers is not a re-make, it's officially called a new, or alternative version, which is the current euphemism for a re-make. What are the dangers involved in attempting a "new version"?*

Kaufman: When I first began discussing the project, I felt: "Why do it? It's already been done". As I thought more about it, I felt the theme could be extracted from the particular story, and that this theme was so valid still—or valid again, I should say. It was probably less valid in the '60s, when there seemed to be more discussion, at least, about human values going on in the States. Now I feel there is quite a strong return to Poddiness—at a very rapid rate.

I went back and read the original book and there were things in it that really hadn't been explored in the first movie: particularly, the evolution of the Pods is much more detailed in my version. Because I am interested in science fiction, I thought there was a chance to expand on some of those elements. Then I started reading some of Don Siegel's comments subsequent to releasing his film; he talked about the Pod mentality, that the Pods had insisted his film be cut down and an ending added in a certain way to kind of take the edge off the nightmare. I've known Don for years

"When I began discussing the project I felt 'why do it. It's already been done'."

and the more we spoke about that, the more I became convinced that this film should be re-made.

We decided to make it in a different location, with essentially different characters, although we follow some of the same guidelines of the original film. I wanted to do it without narration, because I felt narration was more a product of the fifties, and belonged in particular to the black-and-white movies. So that became a challenge: how to create a sense of the ominous with this story? We solved that, or at least to our satisfaction, by following the Pods on their adventure from the very beginning. There was a suggestion in the original movie of the skies being dark—it opened under the titles, with dark and ominous skies moving quickly. Well, we went beyond the skies, into deep space [Laughs] to bring you the adventures of the Pods leaving their soon-to-be-defunct planet and going out into the universe. And in a sense we gave them a kind of romantic, heroic aura. In a sense, they become evil only as they enter our own atmosphere.

Don't they all?

Well, they're just little guys trying to survive. In their own way. The problem is that they



Body Snatchers stars—Leonard Nimoy, Donald Sutherland and Jeff Goldblum.

don't want human beings to be human beings. They want them to be emotionless creatures really, only to be interested in things that Pods are interested in—which is, essentially, to have everybody be Pods . . . and more Pods.

Don Siegel had Hollywood Pods cutting his film about in 1956. By now, I suppose, there are more Pods among politicians than film-makers? I've gone over the lists of who is a Pod and who isn't a Pod! In fact, that was the fun of doing the movie, walking along the streets saying, "Who is a Pod? What is a Pod?" "How do we light this guy—is he a Pod or isn't he . . . what's his camera angle?" We had a camera angle we called The Pod Tilt. That word has rapidly entered the American vocabulary. There's a number of articles taking off on that: who is a Pod, what is a Pod? Johnny Carson tells Pod jokes. In the original movie, they didn't really talk about that Pod stuff so much. But I think, coming off Don Siegel's lines, we consciously interjected that word Pod into the movie.

The type of people actively discussing Pods are probably Pods themselves, hence their push of Podology. Isn't that how you recognise them? Pods, of course, will go out of their way to disguise the fact that they are Pods. They know . . . In fact, my favourite moment in the movie is when I hope all your readers will have seen the movie by now, I wouldn't want to give this particular thing away), Donald Sutherland is talking to Leonard Nimoy and

the Transamerica Building is right between them . . . [United Artists is part of the Transamerica conglomerate] Donald is saying they need the Mayor to treat this outbreak, the changes in people in San Francisco, in the way they would treat Legionnaire's Disease or another of those mysterious diseases which have probably drifted down from outer space. "We need help," says Donald. "All the help we can get. The Mayor's a patient of yours, isn't he?" And Leonard, who has pretty much turned the corner at this point, looks at him with suspicion and says, "How did you know

"I've known Don Siegel for years and the more we talked about it the more I felt this film could be re-made."

that?" So that Pods themselves are paranoid. Even though it's a film about paranoia, I love the fact that even the evil guys are paranoid. I saw it more as a nightmare than about paranoia, though I suppose most nightmares are paranoid. You're right. The film is a nightmare, really. We shot most of it at night—a difficult task—and it involves variations of dreams that most people have had. Essentially, it involves a lost soul running through the night and confronting that other you—as Donald must do at one point. That is what's terrifying.

A horror movie in fact.

Yes, but also a love story at the same time. I

Donald Sutherland receives a disturbing phone message.



hope it does not rely on shock value alone, that it builds up on a growing sense of claustrophobia and paranoia, an atmosphere closing in on our characters.

Why did you take the story out of a small community and into a big city—and your own home base, in fact. What's San Francisco done to you that made you inflict the place with Pods? I love San Francisco! And in fact, 22 years ago, big cities weren't so scary. They were strongholds of security. They were places which were not going to fall apart. New York in 1956—that was its best time, really. It was a great city. Now it's a scary city, you just don't go out at night, whether it's because of Pods or emotional human beings out for revenge. Why not New York, then?

Kaufman

It's a scarier movie by far if it happens in a place that is richer in human values. I think the characters that we drew in the movie, are particular San Franciscan characters. Contemporary, not only for America, but for me and us, for San Francisco. These relationships have to be very specific, which required a lot of discussion and work in rehearsals—a great reward of the film. In another city, Donald Sutherland as a Health Inspector would probably not have as a best friend, a psychiatrist dealing with modern therapies, and a poet who is a kind of neurotic guy. But in San Francisco, he would. He would also cook for himself, have dinners in the back yard, and he would be that kind of earnest detective that we show him to be in the beginning . . . But he is a detective type of guy, earnest in his job. He believes in it. That kind of earnestness doesn't exist in many American cities. He believes that the world can be improved—even on a small level.

Also, the move to the big city came about because . . . well, the original had more of a sense of a Gothic tale. I wanted to expand that into an area in which people dream their nightmares more. I dream my nightmares running through cities. I do a lot of running in my nightmares!

Nocturnal jogging.

Right. [Laughs].

Despite the move, you still retain the small community element—Sutherland and his friends. Well, San Francisco is something of a half-way

place in a way, it suggests a large city but it only has 700,000 people. [London has 7,000,000] If we'd taken it to New York, we would have had other problems. But San Francisco is bounded by the bridges and so forth. We didn't feel it necessary to go into every detail of how to escape a city that was closed off, that's another kind of movie. In this one, the invasion is well along the way when the film begins. The very first voice you hear is this woman saying: "There's some more flowers, children. Go pick them—take them home to your parents." And her voice has got that little edge to it that lets you know she's not so terrific. Then, you see this priest on the swing, a little bit stunned and dazed and meant to be one of the first Pods.

Your pal, Robert Duvall, in fact, I have to admit that didn't work for me. If there's one city in the world where you might expect to find a spaced-out priest sitting on a swing, that place would be San Francisco!

Yes, right . . . a normal occurrence daze! Well, he's a kind of black herring or something. My feeling there, of course, was that all of these kind of movies have had priests in them: *The Exorcist*, *The Omen*. That's our priest. We got him out of the way. It was to satisfy all those people who want priests in these movies! Of course, we never see him again.

Well, Bobby Duvall is a very busy star these days. Or maybe he prefers reading a whole script. The story goes that you refused to show the climactic pages of the scenario to anyone. Including your top star, Sutherland.

"The word Pod has rapidly entered the American vocabulary. Articles are appearing: who is a Pod? What is a Pod?"

Yes, yes. None of the actors read the script before they committed to the movie. Donald was the first actor to know, say three or four days before we shot it, because he had all those other scenes leading to it. I went to his trailer with Bob Solo [producer] and Rick Richter [W. D. Richter, screenwriter]. We sat there and I outlined—with some trepidation!—what was going to happen to his character. Donald just sat there for a minute and then said, "That's great!" He agreed, he understood the effect of the ending was to really wake you up from the nightmare.

In a sense, some people feel it's a negative ending. I just feel it's appropriate for a nightmare. You go to a horror movie to be scared. If you see a horror movie with a happy ending, that's just whitewash. It's not so exciting. I think, lately, we've accepted this possibility; this is certainly not the first.

But don't you rather give it away, that Sutherland has become a Pod—by his change of clothes. He's all neat and tidy, back in his office routine. Last time we saw him he was charging around setting the Pod-house ablaze, getting into an awful mess.

We're not hiding anything. Most people just don't suspect it. No, the feeling is that he's walking along there in the office, following the prescribed guidelines for behaviour—pretending to be one of them and that they don't know it. And we didn't really try to hide the truth of it.

It's a far more positive—as in honest—ending than the original.

Well, as you probably know, the studio



Philip Kaufman and Don Siegal, the two *Body Snatchers* directors (new and old) meet up.

tapped on a new ending to Don's film. Originally, he had Kevin McCarthy running from that small town to the highway and shouting "They're here! They're already here! You're next!" And nobody listened to him. But that was considered too black for audiences in 1956. In fact, both the beginning and the end of that first movie is one of those notorious Hollywood things which said essentially that everything will be all right because the FBI will be brought in and all outer space will be cleaned up! We tried to restore the dignity of Don's original ending. As I say, people don't want to leave a horror movie with smiles on their faces. They want something to scare them. They want to experience fear. And I think there is something that should not be ignored about the value of fear. It's a religious feeling—frightening and fearsome.

It's much to Sutherland's credit that he'll take on a film without knowing the climax, let alone the rest of the script.

Donald wants to be an actor more than a star. His great line about his role was "My character must never be aware that the movie he's in is called *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. I am in a love story. I am a Health Department official. And I must never know that there is a greater danger." And he doesn't, unfortunately. When Kevin McCarthy comes careering into his car and shouts in his face—from what was supposed to be the ending of the last movie—he's been running these 22 years, shouting at everybody!—Donald doesn't get it. And he suffers the consequences.

Not only doesn't he know what film he's in, he didn't see the original film, right?

Yes, that's true. In fact, none of the cast had seen the other movie, surprisingly enough, because most people, one way or another, have had a chance to see it. In fact, a lot of people have not seen it. They think they've seen it. The title is very famous. That's why we didn't change the title.

I was praising Donald Sutherland, because you've had major problems with your previous stars. Cliff Robertson in *The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* . . . and Clint Eastwood took over the direction from you on *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. How do you know that you've struck gold, located an actor who trusts your judgement?

You don't always know that. Donald is a very sensitive man. He tries to get everything clear and everything necessary around him so he can operate the best way as an actor. In the final analysis, Donald's judgement and choices are made as an actor not a star. I've had problems with only one or two cases with stars, one of whom was very interested in special light and things that detracted from the whole atmosphere of the movie, and the other, who I just didn't agree with at a certain point on the form, style, rhythm and pace of the movie. Donald doesn't get into that, really. He's only interested in the analysis of his character. We have various conversations about his role, and he got very excited by his Health Department character. And he'll do anything to make

it work. I mean Donald did all his own stunts in the movie. He really climbed up there in the Pod nursery . . . came out of the window. When he's running at one point and the flames billowed out, a guy is actually hit and burnt on the set. He was not a stuntman, just an extra who happened to be drinking on the side. He didn't hear the repeated warnings about "Don't run too close to Donald because there's going to be this flame-thrower thing". We outlined the whole scene. This guy was a little drunk and got in the way and *whoomp!* The flames came out and I saw this guy rolling about, covered in flames.

What was the damage?

Well, he showed up for work next day with his hand all bandaged and said it was the best time he'd ever had—and he wanted to do it again!

That's San Francisco for you!

His wife was Mexican; she was a Pod-carrier. She was saying, "There I was, holding my big potato, and a man came up and told me my husband had just been roasted!"

Then apart from actors like Sutherland and Duvall, I know you get on well with Leonard Nimoy.

I just feel he's an actor's actor. He isn't concerned with the star thing, either. In fact, the Star Trek thing I was writing was designed totally around Leonard. There was a little bit of objection here and there when I suggested Leonard for the psychiatrist. "Oh everybody will say he's the guy with the ears and stuff". I just felt he'd be very good at this kind of thing. And he was, of course. We all had such a great time making this movie. There was a lot of clowning. Everybody was very funny. And Leonard said, "If only we could do this every day for the rest of our lives, we would have happy lives."

That good?

It was just fun coming to work every day. I had this ensemble of five actors, all of whom are excellent actors, generous with one another. We had four or five days' rehearsal upfront, which were intense—because they hadn't read the script. So there was a lot of discussion

"The film is a nightmare, really. We shot most of it at night. Difficult task."

back and forth. The plot is in danger of hokiness at all times, the more real we could make these characters, the more valid the movie becomes. So I was excited by all the actors. They understood the human values they had to give their characters.

Or not, as the case might be?

Sure. Once Leonard understood all the finer points of his character, there would be a moment when Donald wouldn't be sure how to handle a scene. Leonard would say, "No matter what you do—do anything!—because I know how I'm going to respond to it. Because I'm a Pod. You can do anything and I'll have a response."

They did gell extremely well together. That's what I meant before about your version still retaining the small community feel.

I was particularly excited by the way one scene worked out—where they're all trying to explain to Leonard the things that are happening, and he's trying to get the details out. It works out in such a way that he seems to be the only normal person there! They're all breaking down and he appears rational.



"Pull over to the side of the road, I need your help . . . Something terrible has happened . . . You fools. You fools! You're in danger. Can't you see? They're all after you. They're after all of us! Our wives, our children — everyone! They're here already. You're next! You're next! You're next! You're next . . ." — Kevin McCarthy, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, 1956.



Nimoy and Sutherland discuss the weird occurrences in Los Angeles.

There's also rather more humour in the new version . . .

Right. Don Siegel told me he had various humorous things going on in his film, but when they previewed it, the studio said "This is a horror movie. What's this funny stuff in there? You've obviously made a mistake. Take out all those jokes!" We've added quite a bit. My feeling here was that once the humour begins to go, we would feel the loss in the film. When humour is lost, things get scary. Humour is a kind of immunity, and Donald in particular, imparts a great sense of humour—it's in his movies, in his eyes. And anyone that can laugh at something odd seems immune from the dangers involved. As that humour fades and the other elements filter across, the audience will, as he says, discover and share the horror with him.

How did you persuade Dan Siegel and Kevin McCarthy to come into the new act?

Well, as I say, I've known Don for many years. I was in his office talking to him about his role and the door opened and a head peeked in. Kevin McCarthy! He just happened to be in Los Angeles for one day, and just happened to look in on Don.

What did Kevin McCarthy's head say when it peeked around a door—don't tell me. "They're coming! They're here!"

Right. "They're here. I'm here! I'm already here." Ever since that meeting, I've been trying to figure out whether it was Don's idea



"Help! They're coming! They're coming! They're coming!! Help! Help! They're coming! They're coming! Listen to me. Listen! You're next! Please, please... You're next! We're in danger! Please listen to me... Something terrible... You're next...! Let me out of here. You're next! They're coming! They're coming!"—Kevin McCarthy, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, 1979.

or mine, or whatever—I think we just both said, "This guy has just got to be in the movie!" Then I remember walking back to my office, sitting down with Rick Richter and saying, "Okay, we've got this scene where this guy is running into the car—it's Kevin McCarthy and he's really coming from the original movie and he's really been running 22 years and nobody listens to him and he bumps into the car, and still nobody listens to him. We bump off the old movie right here and we start the new one going really full swing!"

That you did! Where did you find your special-effects people?

Tom Burman actually worked for me on **The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid**. He's one of the three or four ranking make-up men in the world. He supplied the alien creatures in *Close Encounters*. And he created our make-up effects in *Invasion* with Edouard Henriques. We explored mechanical effects at first, with the Pods coming out, which were very expensive, difficult to work—and inhuman. I really wanted this thing to be human. I wanted that whole birth thing to have the feeling of a human form emerging, to bridge the gap between plant-birth and human-birth. *Where did you shoot that amazing garden scene with all the Pods giving birth? In the womb of the studio, I suppose?*

"The priest, a bit dazed, on the swing is meant to be one of the first Pods."

No, we did all those effects in San Francisco, on location. That whole birth sequence in the garden actually takes place in that very backyard that overlooks the Transamerica building in San Francisco.

What about the opening sequence of the Pods leaving home and coming our way again?

Ron Baxter and Howard Preston did that. Ron worked in the *Star Trek* tv series, in fact he and Howard did the mind-boggling work on the much-acclaimed documentary, *The Universe, Man's Changing Perception*. They were suggested to me originally by Carroll Ballard, the San Francisco film-maker. They're into commercials essentially. But they are very good problem solvers. I sat with them for months after the shooting, primarily with Howard Preston, and we tried and tried to figure out how to do this particular sequence of the organic matter, space eggs or whatever, leaving this other world and drifting through space.

Good scene?

They look something like UFOs, or the photographs of such sightings. People always wonder what happens to a UFO. Well, I tend to think that they don't merely zoom close to earth, then take off for home. We speculate that they land, come in through the rain maybe, they're absorbed into the earth and begin to bud again, grow some roots, tendrils... *How did you shoot that sequence? What did you use?*

At one point we reached an impasse. I had already shot the opening scenes where the stuff is supposed to land in San Francisco. I'd found the jelly substance on a back shelf in an art store: a big gallon jug of some clear matter. I'd been looking from store to store in search of something... So I used that, hanging it from the trees and so forth. Back in Los Angeles, we were trying to duplicate the stuff, chemically. We did one experiment



Kevin McCarthy jokes around with director Kaufman and Donald Sutherland off set.

with it and it didn't seem to work. We were just not getting anywhere. Then—our gallon jar of the jelly stuff ran dry.

Naturally, we went back to the shop in San Francisco for some more. And it was gone! The guy in the shop remembers a woman coming in and buying up all the available stuff. She had a kind of blank look on her face! *The Pods strike back!*

Nobody in the store had any memory of what this stuff was or how to get more of it. Finally we had to take it to a chemist and have it broken down and, you know, there were a few unknown elements in it. Unknown to man.

The plot thickens.

Well, we were able to approximate the substance and the sequence was done, finally, very resourcefully and inexpensively for what effects cost now, or, mechanical effects. I wanted this film to be organic. I didn't believe

"In fact, none of the cast had seen the original *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*."

and I don't believe, as I have Veronica Cartwright say, that they will come in metal ships. I don't think that's how they will come.

In fact, you believe they've arrived already—if I'm to take your comment about Legionnaire's Disease seriously. Are you saying that such mystery illnesses come down from up there someplace?

Well, that might be a valid thing. Nobody has really figured out where it did come from.

You don't close your mind to such theories? No, I don't! I think a lot of them are often simplistically answered. I distrust them when they become simplistic answers to the world's

problems. You know, If you're Virgo, today don't cross the road. Those are primitive answers to things. But when they open questions that we don't know the answers to—that's exciting. I've been interested in science fiction for a long time, and often write things

"The *Star Trek* screenplay I was writing was designed around Leonard Nimoy."

into my films connected with it and other cult and religious traditions.

Like what?

Well, the whole loss of soul thing is one. And the huge shadows, as Donald and everyone run along the waterfront. Loss of shadow: loss of soul. It creates something you can't really articulate. We must continually recreate ourselves—they get you when you sleep, that's an old concept in religions. Wake up! Wake up!

Didn't you also have a strange occurrence in San Francisco during shooting. There was a story in the San Francisco Chronicle about a mysterious shower of what appeared to be spider webs drifting over the town. No one knew where it came from or why.

That happened a week before we started shooting.

And it wasn't a publicity stunt by your people?

No, it was headlines in the papers. I happened to be in Los Angeles, I wasn't even there that day. Thousands of spider webs just came drifting out of nowhere—they decided later they were spider webs... But suddenly, San Francisco was inundated with this flood



Donald Sutherland and co-star Brooke Adams.

of something, people didn't know what it was... We have a shot of Donald cutting out that particular headline from a paper at the beginning of the movie.

Oh! That was the real headline. I presumed it was simply part of the script.

That was the real headline. We changed the masthead of the paper, but it was exactly the headline.

Next month: Philip Kaufman on his aborted *Star Trek* movie plans in an exclusive double-Trekker interview, also featuring one of the two new members of the Enterprise crew, Persis Khambatta.

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New SF Combine

New York has an interesting new film combine—SF Film Productions. It's been set up by New Yorkers Norman Jacobs and Kerry O'Quinn, a Kansas City producer called Wade Williams and a Baltimore company, Planet Picture Corporation, which made *The Alien Factor*. Wade Williams was the producer of the tele-movie about Charles Manson, *Helter Skelter*, and has several of films on his distribution list, including *Rocketship X-M*, for which he has shot extra special-effects. But who are Messrs. Jacobs and O'Quinn—the publishers of *Starlog*. Hence the "SF" in their company stands, not for the obvious, but *Starlog Future Films*...

After *Rolling Stone* publisher Jann Wenner and *National Lampoon* getting into films, and now *Starlog*—how about it, Dez?

Carpenter on Spielberg

Tough words from hot-shot John Carpenter on last year's hot-shot, Steven Spielberg. Interviewed by Gavin Millar on BBC2's *Arena Cinema* show, while shooting *Halloween*, John Carpenter tried to explain why he didn't like CE3K.

"It's pretentious... out of control. I think he lost control of it. There were parts of it that were not well done. I didn't care for it. It didn't have a single purpose in it—it went off in several directions. One of the things I admire about a great work, even if it is flawed, is that the director is seen to be in control of it, that he directs the film or tells the story with a great deal of authority—and I didn't think that was there in *Close Encounters*. I think any great work has a theme... to be discerned from the message that is not hitting you over the head, that is a little more subtle. Ideas, themes can't be paramount, because first and foremost, in my opinion, films are to entertain—to be entertained by and to feel. And it's through the feeling that you get from watching the film that you're going to derive the theme or the importance of a movie."

Pleasance on Carpenter

Until taking on the redoubtable Shelley Winters in his Elvis! tele-movies, the first star actor John Carpenter has directed, was Britain's horror-veteran, Donald Pleasance, in *Halloween*. Intriguing than, to hear the actor discussing John on the same BBC2 show.

"He's good, as far as I can see. I've only seen *Assault on Precinct 13*. I admired it a lot. There were certain things I didn't understand, but my teenage children explained... to what extents the film was intended to be tongue-in-cheek. There were parts I couldn't actually accept, and there are parts in *Halloween* which I can't accept—which I have to bring myself around to seeing his way because it's his film and then I can accept them. I believe people are behaving in a way which they couldn't possibly, in real life, behave. And that's always difficult because if you're one of

the people, you're the one that's going to look like an idiot... if the director doesn't have some very good reason for people saying lines which people don't really say. In other words, I think the script is over-written. I don't know what it means—but it's a little melodramatic. Certainly, my role. But, of course, it's not intended to be real... that awful word, realistic."

Donner Dumped!

Superman's director has been dropped from the sequel. Richard Donner can't say why. He doesn't know. All he does know is that *Superman 2* is going ahead—at last! But without Richard Donner. Richard Lester is expected to take over the reins when production commences on August 1.

Darker still are the tales emerging from the Selkirk camp at Pinewood Studios. Donner was the man who, in this magazine last month, was warning his producers to get a move on, extract their digits from counting all the superprofits, or they would lose various key special-effects personnel to other sf productions in town. Reading deeper into, or behind his words, we had the feeling that no more shooting would be carried out on *Superman 2* at all; that the Selkinds would release what they had, as a kind of *Superman 1½*.

Having spoken his piece, Donner seems to have broken the fragile peace between himself and his bosses—and been sacked for it.

Christopher Reeve, *Superman* himself, who has had his own super-row with the producers is upset at the news of Donner's axing. The

Reeve argument has been settled: it almost had to be, of course. "Money," he insists, "had no part of that negotiation—when I resettled they agreed to the money in ten minutes. The difficulty is to make sure, in this age of the automatic sequel, that the public don't get ripped off. Producers make up the most ridiculous, artificial situations for sequels just to get more money out of the public. But it must be understood that our script was two screenplays conceived in advance. The stories were completely set and done and designed. This is not a cheap exploit of the product."

Donner's name should still appear on the new film, however. He has already shot about 80% of it, everything barring the final effects work and "a major, major disclosure scene." Having made such a good job of *Superman*, he would, of course, have brought much to the sequel that would have been invaluable.

"It's eerily his dedication and perseverance," praises Chris Reeve, "that made the first film happen."

"It's a terrible shame," says Richard Donner, who merely wanted to finish the job. He had no desire to stick around for *Superman 3*, 4 or more. "All I know is," he told the British film trade paper, *Screen International*, "that Mr Selkirk and Mr Spengler decided to make the picture without me. There are no such things as rights. A director is a director and he can be fired by a producer anytime he likes. I don't involve myself legally. I have enough on my plate. I leave it to the legal people."

"He's an extremely talented end capable



H.G. Wells' time machine flies again. Malcolm McDowell is the new pilot, H.G. himself in Hollywood's new movie, *Time After Time*, wherein Mr Wells meets Jack the Ripper.

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director," adds Christopher Reeve. "I'm very sorry that for whatever reason, he's leaving."

Reeve could well be leaving the series himself. On the Russell Harty tv chat-show, he said he hoped there would not be a **Superman 3**. "That would be unfair to the public, because that would be a cheat. You've seen a man fly, turn in love, turn the world backwards—that's a lot for a couple of movies. What are you going to do for an encore?" A rather naive comment considering the ongoing success of, say, the 007 films.

Last word from Richard Donner. "The whole thing is despicable. But in an odd way they made me purge myself and for that I'm happy." Which makes **Superman 2** or 1½ or 1¼ or whatever, sound like the world's most expensive laxative.

Train Super Flop

Dan Curtis' big-budget tv series, **Supertrain**, has come off the rails. And Dan with it. Having bought the series, apparently sight unseen, BBC-tv must be worried about their (our) money. But then, so is NBC. **Supertrain** is a superloper. Dan Curtis has been axed as the project's executive producer; another filmmaker, Rod Amateau, is out, too, as producer. The show may yet survive. It's being rethought, re-tooled, re-designed, re-cast, reinvigorated and expected to be back in the ratings war of America's tv-land for a second try very shortly. But it needs a lot of work first.

The show's premiere was worse than even the most tentative of series pilots. The



Coming soon to these pages. **Star Trek** the Motion Picture, courtesy of ex-director Philip Kaufman and latest crew addition Persis Khambatta. Pictured above, the starring trio from the original tv series. More on Leonard (Spock) Nimoy elsewhere in this column.

The poster art from Werner Herzog's remake of the 1922 horror classic **Nosferatu**.



nuclear-powered high-speed train was barely seen at all, and then only with the aid of very obvious miniatures. During the climactic fight atop the train, the roof was suddenly the standard, everyday US train breadth, while all interiors had made each carriage and suite look at least twice the usual gauge-width. The action was tame in the extreme. The wags were right. This really was **Love Boat On Wheels**. From the gang of apparently regular stars—train staff like Edward Andrews, Harrison Page and Michael Delano—none were interesting or important enough to make anyone tune in the following week.

Dan Curtis directed this opener; I use the word "directed" loosely. He had the train stuffed full of less than superstars: Stella Stevens, Fred Williamson, Robert Alda (father of **MASH** star Alan Alda, so he ought to recognise a duff series when he sees it), George Hamilton, Kennan Wynn. True, Lynda Day George was not in sight, for once. But it was a very tired old cast. Plus an old plot: Steve (yawn!) Lawrence played a Hollywood hit-man on the train. Who cares about a Hollywood agent with debts? It's the train everyone wanted to see—and didn't.

The root cause of the flop was the lack of lead-in or development time given to the production by the NBC network. As with most

not ideas, NBC wanted the show on the road (or the rails) within five minutes of accepting the basic premise. NBC President, Fred Silverman (previously head honcho at CBS and ABC, where he started the mini-series notion with **Rich Man, Poor Man** and his greatest coup, **Roots**), has been man enough to admit to his errors: a rash of rushes. "No one can do his best work under that kind of deadline pressure." It won't happen again, Silverman vows. So maybe, **Supertrain** will help put American television back on the right rails, after all. Usually, new series formats are forever rushed into being; it's a miracle any of them get on the air in time, much less prove halfway decent enough to survive. Not, it appears, that Hollywood had finally convinced the network chiefs that speed is not the essence of good tv. Speedy action may prevent a rival network ripping off a new idea and getting it on the tube first, but it doesn't make for anything close to decent programming. It's the old adage most of our mothers taught us in the cradle: More haste, less speed.

Ear, Ear

Leonard Nimoy is back on the road again. For rather more than the \$5,000 he gets for any appearance at a **Star Trek** convention, he's touring the States in his one-man show. **Vincent**. This is written, produced and per-

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formed by Nimoy with assistance from about a hundred paintings by the subject of the piece, Vincent Van Gogh. Odd psychological choice of role for Mr Spock. Didn't Van Gogh cut off one of his ears?

Down Under Tops

Australia's brave new cine-world - with a little help from the Americans - dominated the prize-winners at the seventh annual Fantastique Film Festival at Avoriaz, in France. Roger Corman headed the jury (which included perennial Corman star David Carradine) and gave the Grand Prize to Richard Franklin's down-under version of *Carrie-Patrick*. Jim Sharman's creepy *Night Prowler* got the *Special Mention* nod. The French Anetenne 2 tv network split its prize options betwixt Colin Eggleston's terrific ecological terror tale, *The Long Weekend* - and Philip Kaufman's weak-kneed American re-make of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Then, the United States took the remaining trophies. The jury fell for Don Coscarelli's *Phantasm* ("if this one doesn't scare you - you're already dead!") while the critics (so-called) flipped over John Carpenter's *Halloween*. So okay, it concluded: Australia 3 America 3.

Our own view of the proceedings: the Aussies

were far superior to the Stassesside junk, and where on earth have the French, Italian and other Euro-fantasists gone to? Film of the entire event: undoubtedly *The Long Weekend* which makes *Body Snatchers* and *Halloween* look like popcorn commercials.

Backing Drac

The "angels" who invested in the Broadway revival of *Dracula*, can now afford their own blood-banks; one per artery. Into its second year at New York's Martin Beck Theatre, the John L. Balderstone-Hamilton Deane play (a surprise flop in London with Terence Stamp) has so far netted around \$1,601,000 on its original \$300,000 investment. After divvying up, fifty-fifty, with the management, this gives the backers a profit of 266%. Better than a bite in the neck or our own dear 5% pay policy, which tends to bite elsewhere.

These profits don't cover the extra grosses of two touring version of the play in the States, one of which is toplined by the British actor, Jeremy Brett. The money should continue rolling in until (maybe) the film version opens up. That's the one featuring Broadway's original Drac, suave Frank Langella, with Lord Laurence Olivier as Van Helsing, and directed

by *Saturday Night Fever*'s John Badham. The music, thank heaven, is not by the Bee Gees.

Drac Backing

Joining the sudden spate of Dracula movies (we've yet to see Werner Herzog's *Nosferatu* or George Hamilton in *Love At First Bite* - ugh!), is Romania. Not such an odd choice of country when you think about it, as Romania (Rumania, if you prefer; but I reckon the Romanians know best how to spell it) is the true home of the gent we've come to know as Dracula. Over there, he's called, as Doru Nastase's film is, *Vlad The Impaler*. (the subtitle reads: *Or; The True Life of Dracula*). Starring those well-known names what we all know and love (Stefan Sileanu, Ernest Maftei, Emanoil Petrut and Alexandru Repan), the film is, according to writer Mircea Mohor, "the first true-to-face representation about the age and personality of one of the most fascinating figures of Romanian history." Should work wonders for their tourist trade.

Rancho De Luxe

Check out The Top 120 Film Chart (last month) you'll see that *Star Wars* has now made some-

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GEORGE C. SCOTT TISH VAN DEVER MELVYN DOUGLAS JEAN MARSH

The promotional brochure for Peter Medak's Canadian venture *The Changeling*. Sounding like a cross between *The Omen* and *Legend of Hell House* the film boasts George C. Scott in a blazing finale.



Six Million Dollar Man Lee Majors is finally beginning to live up to his name. Majors has leaped over tv into movies and stars in *The Norseman*.

thing akin to the gross national product of Italy or Sardinia - \$164,765,000. As is only fair, George Lucas has a healthy cut of that take. But what, I ask myself in the odd reverie, what could any of us do with a hundred-million dollars... give or take the odd fifty-million. I mean, think about it. It's a bigger fantasy than the movie was.

Apart from naturally setting up other Lucas film movies, George has marked his mega-millionaire status by moving from his small San Anselmo house to a vast, 1,800-acre ranch in Nicasio, San Francisco. He's making it a fully operational, fantastically equipped production and indeed, post-production headquarters. His own version of his mentor Francis Coppola's short-lived set-up in San Francisco itself, American Zoetrope. That's where George got his start. Coppola's bold plans went awry however, as his first success paled and he had to fight to the top again by scripting until he made *The Godfather* movies.

George saw where the high-minded Zoetrope plans failed. He doesn't intend going the same way. So he's turning his home into his studio - "at a very substantial cost," points out his attorney. He won't necessarily shoot films there, but he'll plan them, discuss them, and do all the post-shooting work on the ranch. His wife, Marcia, has a super editing layout, for example. Lucas also plans (like Coppola did) to give other film-makers the run of the place. He sees his ranch - Bulltail, it's called - as a gathering place, a think-tank for other like-minded film men and women. In short, he's doing that which Hollywood studios never do: putting something back into the industry.

He's also finally able to resuscitate his long-postponed plans to make *The Radioland Murders*, first announced in 1974. Then it was supposed to have been his next film after *American Graffiti*, long before he thought of putting Flash Gordon back on the screen, couldn't obtain the rights, and dreamed up Luke Skywalker instead. As with all his other output just now, he won't be directing the murder thriller - Ted Flicker has the honours. The script, as with *Graffiti*, the *Graffiti* sequel and his Paris movie, *French Postcards*, is (still) by Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz and the star headliner will be the *Graffiti* girl now better known from Laverne and Shirley - Cindy Williams.

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Starburst Letters

Thank you for Starburst. Your magazine seems to be getting better while Starlog seems to be on the decline. And Starburst is half the price!

How about articles on some of the following: Out of the Unknown, Project X, Lost In Space, The Tomorrow People, Land of the Giants, The Time Tunnel, UFO and above all, more Doctor Who!

Why not print a list of fan clubs specialising in tv science fiction. I'm sure many readers would be interested in this. I have enclosed some useful addresses.

Doctor Who

The Doctor Who Appreciation Society, 38 Melrose Avenue, London SW19 8BY. The fan club for Doctor Who fans.

The Patrick Troughton Preservation Society, 20 Barnfield, New Malden, Surrey KT3 5RH. A fan club devoted to the second Doctor Who.

Jon Pertwee Appreciation Society, 3 Weymouth Gardens, Gates Tyne and Wear. A fan club devoted to the third Doctor.

The British Nick Tate Fan Club, 30 Palewell Park, London SW14.

Six of Dns, The Prisoner Appreciation Society, PO Box 61, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL52 3JX. Star Trek

The Star Trek Action Group, 15 Letter Dial, Cairnbank, Lochgilphead, Argyll, Scotland.

Beyond Antares, 56 Spring Lane, Bishopstoke, Eastleigh, Hants SO5 6BA.

Empathy, 30 Dvenden Way, Lee Mount, Helifax, W. Yorks.

William Shatner Fenfare, 25 Wolsey Road, Caversham, Reading, Berks.

Starship Exeter Organisation, 2 John Spencer Square, London N1.

And finally, a general tv science fiction fan club, Space, Northampton Road, Wellingborough, Northants.

Rev Ian McLachlan, Selkirk, Scotland.

I recently bought Starburst 6 and I'd like to congratulate you on another great issue.

The cover alone was enough to make me buy the magazine—I've always felt that the design of the *Liberator* was the most original since the *Enterprise* herself.

The interview with the creator of *Bleke's 7* (Terry Nation) was very enjoyable. However, there was one terrible feature: the *Marvel sf Comics Index*. I'd rather have seen a piece on the *Spider-Man* and *Conan* newspaper strips which are not likely to be seen in Britain.

I thoroughly enjoyed *Things to Come* and *The Road to Close Encounters* but the highlight of Starburst 6 was the *Superman the Movie* review. For a change, John Brosnan did "cast a critical eye over" a film and many interesting facts emerged that were new to me (such as the construction of the Fortress of Solitude).

After reading the review, I'm even more envious than ever that the film still hasn't arrived in Northern Ireland, even though it was released in London before Christmas '78. Would you believe that the first *Spider-Man* film (reviewed in Starburst 2) has just arrived in Belfast, a year after its release date!

Anyway, I didn't write to "cast a critical eye" (love that phrase!) over Irish cinemas, but rather to throw a few suggestions your way.

1. Now that *Superman* is in the news how about an article based on the movie serials and television shows of the forties and fifties.
2. A series on all the other small screen super-heroes including the less well-known ones such as the *Green Hornet* and the more famous shows like *Batman*.

And speaking of the Dynamic Duo, how about a feature and photos on the new two hour *Batman* tv movie just shown in America?

Alan Boyd, Belfast, N. Ireland

At last, a decent film and tv science fiction magazine for us long-suffering Britishers. For far too long we have had to make do with American magazines which inform us only of American happenings (some of which we never see or hear of again).

Starburst is a great magazine and I hope it stays around for a long, long while.

However, I have one complaint. In issue 5 you informed us of forthcoming interview with Terry Nation which you were running after the many questions about *Doctor Who* etc. On reading this I was horrified! What about Gerry Anderson? He had done more for British tv sf than any other person. He has created and

produced our best of shows, all of which have been thoroughly original, whereas Nation has created a few good sf concepts. So how does Nation get first priority over Anderson? Or are you avoiding the Anderson shows on purpose?

David Gibson, Felthorpe, Norwich.

By now, David, you will already have seen Starburst 8 and its interview with Gerry Anderson. We have further features on both the Anderson tv shows and *Doctor Who* planned for the months ahead. But there was no deliberate attempt to establish an order of importance. It was simply that Terry Nation was available for an interview before Gerry Anderson!

The state of the science fiction film is improving at last, which means we will see quite a few good films in the near future. Unfortunately the current science fiction boom will also, as with its 1950s predecessor, create a wave of rip-off movies. But to cover the months when there is little of quality to review why not cover some of the films of recent years that have been ignored by other publications in the sf field. For example, you could run reviews of such latter day-classics as



Fahrenheit 451, *Planet of the Apes* and *Soylent Green*. It might be interesting to do an interview with Chertlon Heston who has appeared in many science fiction films including *The Omega Man* as well as the previously mentioned *Soylent Green* and *Planet of the Apes*.

Garryl MacGregor, Ripon, N. Yorks.

Despite initial appearances, *Darryl*, we don't intend to restrict our Science Fiction Classics series to the movies of the 1950s. So watch future issues for the films you mention. And for those readers who have not been paying attention, the Starburst SF Classics series has so far featured *War of the Worlds* (SB4), *Dark Star* (SB5), *Silent Running* (SB6), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (SB7), *This Island Earth* (SB8) and *Forbidden Planet* (SB9). Watch for your favourite!

Send all comments and queries to us at:
STARBURST LETTERS,
Jedwin House,
205-211 Kentish Town Road,
London NW5.



The Friends of Tom Baker, c/o 45 Durham Road, Blackhill, Co Durham DH8 8RS.

Doctor Who Fan Club, Third Acce, Leeds Road, Hipperholme, Halifax, W. Yorks.

The Elizabeth Sladen Friendship League, Brantwood, 25 Broom Valley Road, Rotherham, S. Yorks. S60 2QC. Devoted to the actress who played Sarah Jane Smith.

Blake's 7

Sevensers, 200 Boundary Road, London SW12 8HF. Information service and fan club.

Blake's Crusaders, 14 Chertwell Close, Church Stretton, Salop.

UFO

The Ed Bishop Fan Club, 69 Brantwood Road, Barneham, Kent DA7 6LH.

Fanderson, 88a Thornton Avenue, London, W4. All Gerry Anderson shows.

Space 1999

Dmnicorn, 67 Eden Grove, Horfield, Bristol. Also a Star Trek club.

Maya Merchandising

The following is a list of some of the fantasy film magazines and books available from us. For our full catalogue send a large self-addressed envelope. All prices include postage—overseas customers please note that orders will be sent by surface mail. Please make cheques/postal orders payable to MAYA MERCHANDISING and send to us at 52 Roydene Road, Plumstead, London SE18 1QA.

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

Subscriptions are for one year and are available on the following magazines:

Future (8 issues)	£7.60
Starburst (12 issues)	£7.20
Starlog (8 issues)	£7.60
Heavy Metal (12 issues)	£14.40

MAGAZINES AND FANZINES

TV Sci-Fi. Nos. 1 to 8 Giant size, glossy 16 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ magazine, 8 full colour pages, 16 pages per issue on Star Trek, Dr. Who, Space 1999, \$6m Man etc. All issues feature posters and pin-ups from TV shows

50p each
Little Shoppe of Horrors. American fanzine, excellent value. No. 4: devoted to Hammer films—past, present, and also includes an interview with Dave Prowse. 140 pages. £2.15

Future 9: Body Snatchers, Stella Starr, Buck Rogers, Space Art. £1.00
Starlog 20: Superman, Buck Rogers, Project UFO miniatures. £1.00

Starlog Back Issues

- 1: Star Trek (rare colour pictures plus complete episode guide) £3.90
- 2: Space 1999 Year 1 Guide, Wer of the Worlds, Logen's Run £3.15
- 3: Star Trek Convention, Spaceships, Space 1999 Year 2 Guide, SF TV movies guide £2.40
- 4: Outer Limits TV Guide, Arena, Nick Tate talks, 3-D £2.15
- 5: 3-D part 2, UFO Guide, Star Trek Censored, SF TV Address Guide, Space Art £2.15
- 6: Fantastic Journey, Star Trek, Animated, Special Effects—Part 1 £2.15

Photo Guidebook—Science Fiction Aliens. Aliens from the first science fiction film up to Star Wars including TV creations: 150 b&w stills plus 50 colour stills and posters. 100pp 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ £4.00

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Heavy Metal (USA) The high quality adult illustrated fantasy magazine. 96 pages, over half in full colour.

February 1979: Includes Corben (colour) Moebius, Macedo, McKie

ADULTS ONLY 95p each

STAR WARS

Star Wars Official Collectors Edition.

11" x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " 80 page magazine (24 pages in colour). Star Wars from cover to cover—FX secrets, behind the scenes shots—in fact almost everything you wanted to know about Star Wars £1.20

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Fear: A History of Horror in the Mass Media (Daniels). 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5" 272 pages plus 32 pages of photos. £2.80

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Science Fiction in the Cinema (Baxter) Classic sci-fi films in depth. Illustrated. 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " 240 pages £2.00

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Limited Edition Werewolf print by John Bolton. This beautiful black and white print, signed and numbered by the artist, is limited to 500. 19" x 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (mailed in tube) £1.20

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Spacecraft 2000 to 2100 AD (Cowley). A "Teran Trade Authority Handbook" Fully illustrated with technical data and histories. Full colour throughout. 12" x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (hard cover) 96 pages £3.50

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Nowhere (Corben) An illustrated epic adventure of fantasy and magic in full colour. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9". 112 pages. ADULTS ONLY £4.90

The Trigan Empire (Hamlyn) This beautiful hardcover book reprints 7 of "The Trigan Empire" stories in 190 pages of full colour. Excellent value. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ " £3.80

Why not visit our new shop at 54 Bellegrave Road, Welling, Kent, which stocks our full range of fantasy film related material plus science fiction, horror and fantasy novels and American comics.

Salvage ONE

Review by Tony Crawley

Nice one, Hollywood. *Salvage I* was a kind of *Stepoe* and *Son* go to the Moon and worked like a dream. The whole notion of a scrap dealer making his own rocket—from scrap, of course—and taking off for the moon to bring back all the high-priced NASA junk left up there, was a thoroughly neat idea. But how the concept will pan out into a series is another matter altogether.

Veteran player Andy Griffith was the dealer in junk out for the big score. Something people wouldn't easily forget. Like the guy who picked up a trainload of surplus Korean war combat gear at ten cents on the dollar—and without opening a crate, sold it right back to the US Army for Vietnam. At retail.

So there's Andy as Harry Broderick watching the tv news one night. And there's this feature story about the wealth of gear abandoned on the moon by the Apollo lads. The lunar rover, for one thing. The weather capsules. A whole solar power station. Big stuff. Worth a small fortune—millions! And it's just up there, gathering lunar dust.

Harry has a brainstorm. It becomes more logical when he's out at the North American Aerospace salvage yard and sees all those surplus NASA rocket engines and spaceship frames—again, just sitting there, waiting for the right offer. Next stop—the library—and Harry is rummaging through the "Space Travel" section.

"Planning a moon trip, Mr. Broderick?" snorts the librarian. If only he knew.

Soon enough Harry has found a few like-minded, albeit crazy, people to make his mad notion stick. Fully qualified space experts almost grow on trees (or live in them) now that the space programme has been shuttered in the States. And so, enter Joel Higgins as Skip Carmichael, the astronaut who never got to go; and Trish Stewart (from Jack Webb's *Project UFO*) as Melanie Slozar, an MIT graduate in rocket fuel chemistry and propulsion physics, another ex-NASA employee. When Andy finds them, Skip is selling used cars

and Melanie works in movies—as a "special effects person".

Before the second commercial break, their home-made rocket is coming into being—and the whole idea of the film becomes plausible. I mean, it looks as if anyone could come up with their own space rocket!

Fortunately for the show, the writer-creator and co-producer Mike Lloyd Ross used to be an electronics design engineer. So he knows...! Together with his art director, John Beckman, they pulled it off and made a rocket ship... from *Stepoe's* back yard! First, they found the body of a gasoline tanker truck—voilà, the body of the space ship. For the command module or capsule, they made full use of the shell of an old cement mixer. With a little welding here, a couple of jet engines there—they



Above: Harry Broderick (*Andy Griffiths*) rebuilds a spaceship for some of the most unorthodox salvage operations ever. Right: Slozar (*Trish Stewart*) tests a special rocket fuel to be used in a civilian expedition to the moon.

finished up with a 32 foot, five-ton duplication of a working rocket. Salvage One, in fact.

So: could it fly?

"Of course not," says Ross. "It would need a little acid etching to lighten it. Then it could fly."

"The funny thing is that we found enough parts from various agencies to build the real thing—just the way Andy Griffith does in my script. One government official even muttered something to the effect of: 'You dirty dogs—we've been planning a moon salvage ourselves.'"

Too late, NASA. Andy Griffith got there first. Plus Joel Higgins as Skip, finally get-

ting his chance to go into outer space. Not for NASA but JSSC—Andy's Jettison Scrap and Salvage Company.

The film company behind this great little show is Bennett Katleman Productions, who recently made the six-hour re-make of *From Here To Eternity*, also for Columbia Pictures tv. (Andy Griffith appeared in that as well; so did Raleigh Bond, another of his ex-NASA men helping the junkyard rocket take off.)

Harve Bennett is a longtime writer-producer in television. Apart from his own projects, he was executive producer of *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Bionic Woman* at MCA; Harris Katleman,

a former MCA talent agent, used to be president of MGM-tv where the shows he developed included *Logan's Run*.

Mike Lloyd Ross' co-producer was Ralph Sierigo, another *Bionic* producer. Until recently, Sierigo was on the payroll of the Chuck Fries empire, acting as unit manager for *The Amazing Spider-Man*.

The Ross idea has already gone to series format in the States. Richard Jaeckel's nose-y FBI Man stays with the show, as does J. Jay Saunders who played Andy Griffith's space logistics co-ordinator, Mack. Sheer type-casting! Before he took up acting, Saunders worked in the space and information division of NASA as a logistics co-ordinator in the aerospace programme.



Above: Joe Higgins, Trish Stewart, Jacqueline Scott and Andy Griffiths—The crew of *Salvage One*.

One wonders what Andy and Co can do for an encore. How do they beat a once-in-a-trillion deal like the lunar salvage foray? "Well, Harry Broderick is not really into moon trips—or just junk," says Mike Lloyd Ross, who invented him. "Harry is into adventure. Anything that offers a challenge anywhere in the world—for a fast buck. And Skip and Melanie share his devil-may-care attitude. They're looking for as much gusto in life as possible. The Jettison Scrap and Salvage Company is their front."

Fine, but what will they do next? Mike Ross is hardly short of ideas. Some of them, it must be said, do rather smell like re-runs of *Mission Impossible* . . . *King Kong* . . . even a touch of *Close Encounters*.

Listen . . .

"Future episodes will find them hired to bring an iceberg into a drought-stricken California coastal city . . . blow up a sunken spy-ship disguised as a pleasure yacht, before Cuban authorities find it . . . locate a highly unusual eight-foot gorilla off the coast of East Africa and deliver for a circus . . . recover one of Jimmy Doolittle's famous B-52 bombers last seen 36 years ago in Burma . . . and become involved in a mysterious treasure hunt where danger is the name of the game."

I thought so. They can't top the moon bit!

RECORD WORLD

Reviews by Kan Howes

SUPERMAN—THE MOVIE

One major problem with listening to film soundtracks is that they mainly comprise of incidental music. Everyone remembers the main title theme and maybe that of one other scene but, by and large, the rest is merely background melody.

Why, then, do we have a double album—no less—that is likely only to perpetuate the problem? If the music had been by anybody other than John Williams, it would have been less than pleasing, but the entire score is so good that the initial complaint is rendered impotent.

The vast hordes who have seen the film will need little said about the main theme. It is a glorious, rousing and heroic theme, thoroughly befitting



so famous a character. And Williams avoids over-exposure of the melody. There are just enough repeats to remind us what a fine theme it is.

But, the joy of the whole record, for me, is the track called "Read My Mind." It may be sloppy and sentimental, but it's also a knockout. The "Love Theme" is another haunting piece, representative of the whole which is so easy on the ear. Another thing that's impressive with this album is the lack of ear-splitting crescendos which normally punctuate soundtracks of this nature. On the other hand it will not send you to sleep.

A word, incidentally, about the packaging. The paper protective sleeves have some beautiful mini-stills from the film on a black background—really effective. My only complaint is that the jacket has no information about the individual tracks.

This record can only serve to enhance John Williams' considerable reputation as one of the top film composers in the business even further.

Warner Bros. Records. Cat: K66084. Rac retail price £8.99.

TEN LIGHT YEARS AWAY/THE SPIDERS

If you are old enough to remember the old radio serials like *Journey into Space*, or even if you are young enough to be a neo-fen, Maiden records have launched a project here that will appeal to the broad range of science fiction and fantasy enthusiasts.



Half-a-dozen actors perform the stories, using one character as a narrative link between the scenes—a simple enough idea that works well. The basic plots may be staple sf and horror fare, but the versatility of the performers gives these tales an added dimension.

The strength of this recording lies in the diversity of the two stories, embracing the opposing ends of the fantasy genre. Of course, the main advantage these records have over the more conventional readings from famous stories is the originality of script, and I see no reason why this line should not expand.

Despite the garish and vulgar sleeve illustrations the content of these mini-dramas is both thoughtful and entertaining.

Ten *Light Years Away* deals, dramatically, with the concept of an impending cosmic catastrophe that forces the migration of an entire planet. The basic characterisation is built upon an interplay between the principal migrants and a disturbingly human "memory bank", upon which the harassed stership builders are a little too dependent. Tension grows alarmingly as the migrants run out of time.

Unfortunately the sound effects, although sparingly used, tend to muffle some of the conversation. Also, some hesitancy from one of the actors makes the central scene a little hard on the ear.

The stronger of the two offerings is *The Spiders*, a straightforward story



in the disaster-horror vein. The actors (same troupe) are more convincing here and, like the flip-side, the action gets a

bit fast and furious at times but the whole thing comes over with gusto and, more importantly, convinces.

A few subtle touches in the sound affects I enjoyed here too. Especially the sitting room radio, a reminder of this project's roots perhaps.

If you want to get into this kind of thing, I recommend *The Spiders* and suggest that you start there.

Maiden Music. Cat: MP 115. Rac retail price £3.99.

THE MUTANT STRAIN/THE PURPLE PLANET

I think the author of these two scripts may have been an avid fan of stories from the science fiction pulp magazines. Nothing wrong with that of course, especially when the tales are as strong in content as these two.

Strongly, the premise of the two plots is very similar, both concerning



the alien contact theme. Once again the mix is sf and horror with blood-curdling screams and rising strains of agonised torment to boot.

One hallmark of this series seems to be the punchy and—twist in the tail stuff—that leaves you satisfied while listening to the closing music.

Unfortunately the A-side *The Mutant Strain* is more predictable, with clues liberally scattered throughout. There is always the possibility that you could be wrong... but it would be unfair to give the ending away. The story opens as a survey ship lands on a strange planet with some peculiar characteristics. Following the death of her co-adventurers the sole survivor finds life mighty difficult amongst the natives on the planet's surface.

The Purple Planet features another survey party, but the deeds of the natives are far more dastardly here. The plot is fairly strong with underground civilisations, mutilations of the landing party, and a cunning plot to invade Earth and siphon off precious water supplies to replenish an arid world.

The narrative link in this tale is quite ingenious too, and comprises of a doctor's report on a slightly deranged astronaut. And when you hear the hideous screams of a female member of his crew under torture you might excuse his state of mind.

As I said earlier, the pulp flavour

is evident in both stories—with heavy overtones of the "weird menace" category, especially in *The Purple Planet*, though this is no way detracts from the stories. If anything they are enhanced by the connection.

Maiden Music. Cat: MR 113. Rac retail price £3.99.

THE THIRD STAR/SPACE STATION 2-43

If you purchased this record on its own you might be a little disappointed. But taken in conjunction with the other two Maiden records it is quite a welcome change of direction. It is not such a bad idea to diverge a little with new ideas, therefore too much criticism would be a trifle invalid at this point.

The Third Star is a parody. So tongue-in-cheek, in fact, that I'm certain I picked up Janet Street Porter, John Weyna and Magnus Pyke among the welter of dialects employed by the cast. There's a cockney, a brummie and a nasal yank in there somewhere, maybe even a Bantu tribesman as well for all I know.

The plot concerns a local radio view of a rogue meteor that threatens to put a few dents in our beloved Planet Earth. The scientists and the men-in-the-street give their respective views on this phenomenon with suspect articulation. And it turns out that if we planned a few surprises to divert its course, that meteor head a few shocks in store for us too.

Story and script writer Michael Armstrong director of *House on Haunted Hill* seems to have a pre-occupation with extraterrests who have lost their marbles, and this he amply demonstrates on the B-side of the record *Space Station 2-43*.



Consisting of mainly of twenty-odd minutes of lunatic ravings this is the least appealing of the Maiden dramas.

However, the one saving grace of the story is the ending. I just loved the ending. Once again I'll not give the game away but you might just find that it's worth all the ear-splitting lunacy just to savour the finale.

Basically the plot deals with a space virus that eats at the minds of a space station crew. Pretty lean stuff, but, oh, that finish...

Maiden Music. Cat: MR 114. Rac retail price £3.99.

BOOK WORLD

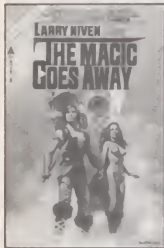
Reviews by Alex Carpenter
and Allen Murdoch.



OR WHO AND THE SONTARAN EXPERIMENT

By Ian Marter
Based upon the Dr Who serial *The Sontaran Experiment* this is an ideal youngster's introduction to science fiction. The storyline does not contain any earth-shattering ideas but, nevertheless, it is good, basic science fiction. Reading the book brought to mind the serial in question and underlined the feeling that it is only the BBC's budgetary restrictions that keeps *Or Who* at a children's viewing time. The plot is mature enough to ensure more adult acceptance. If you have a young brother or sister showing an interest in science fiction then you cannot go far wrong by buying them any book in this excellent series—excluding the historical titles like *Or Who* and the *Crusaders*. It would help them make the transition to reading Moorcock, Silverberg, Farmer, et al. more easily.

AC



THE MAGIC GOES AWAY

By Larry Niven

What happened to all the Unicorns, Dragons and Mermaids of legend? Larry Niven's hypothesis is that Mena (magic) was a natural resource

much like oil or wood that was used up, unthinkingly, by the magicians of yore. When the magic vanished so did the unicorns and all the other creatures that needed mana to survive. Mr Niven has written of these times before and *The Magic Goes Away* is his final story of the last, caring magicians risking all to bring down the moon and replenish the mana before the powers are gone for good. The basic idea is intriguing and the tale that has been woven around the concept is enjoyable.

ACE Books have published the novel as the spearhead of their *Illustrated Series of Science Fiction and Fantasy*. Books in this series will be a larger than usual (6" x 9") and pecked with black and white illustrations. The current title features art by Estebe Maroto and though some of the illustrations best passed over quickly, there are many more that are very good indeed. I'm not sure that the drawings add to the enjoyment of the story—imagination can be so much better—but they do make the book a more attractive presentation.

Perhaps, if this type of book becomes popular, books in general may veer away from being mere "consumer fodder" and become once more items to own with pride. At present *The Magic Goes Away* is available only on import but LSP Books will be distributing it in the UK from 13th March at £2.95.

Published by ACE Books 6" x 9" 224 pages \$4.95—Import.



MAYHEM IN MANHATTAN

By Len Wein & Merv Wolfman

Although first published nearly a year ago copies of this—the first novel to feature the *Amazing Spider-Man*—are only now becoming available in Britain. Quite honestly the importers need not have bothered! *Mayhem in Manhattan* is no more than a comic-book script that didn't make it as a comic

No attempt has been made to translate the story into the new medium and the end result only just reaches the level of a mediocre detective story. That it took two of Marvel's top scripters to write it is, in itself, amazing! AC
Published by Pocket Books. 176 pages \$1.50—Import.



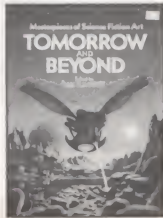
GREAT SPACE BATTLES

By Messrs Cowley & Herridge
These four full marks for imagination. They have taken 44 unrelated cover paintings from an assortment of paperback novels and around them written accounts of the battles that were fought as Man expanded across the Galaxy. The completed work reads as a well-planned "future history" and is an ideal companion to the first handbook—*Spacecraft 2000* to 2100AD.

Published by Hamlyn. 96 pages. £2.99.

TOMORROW AND BEYOND: MASTERPIECES OF SCIENCE FICTION ART edited by Ian Summers.
This is almost a directory of American fantasy artists and only a few exclusions prevent it being classified as such.

That short-coming aside *Tomorrow & Beyond* is an ideal book for anyone interested in the many facets of science fiction painting. Represented here is the work of sixty seven artists includ-



ing John Berkey, Vincent Di Fate, The Brothers Hildebrandt, Ken Barr, Don Meitz, Ken Kelly and Boris. Over 300 paintings are reproduced—all in full colour so there is opportunity to see more than one aspect of each artist's work.

Ian Summers has categorised all the illustrations not by artist but by "subject". Thus there are sections on Aliens, Astronauts, Fantasy, Barbarians, Robots, Humour, plus six others. With the art arranged in this fashion it is possible to gain some insight into the way different artists approach similar subjects.

The book is rounded out by an appendix detailing where each picture originally saw print. From this it is possible to identify the previously unpublished work that makes *Tomorrow & Beyond* that much more important. Printed on quality paper this book is well worth the price and is a valuable addition to anyone's collection.

Published by Workman Publishing. 158 pages. Import. £4.95.



BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

This is really two different books in one. One book consists of two comic-strip and three text stories plus a three-page(!) comic-strip synopsis of the movie. The stories are all new but, apart from that, there is little that can be said in their favour. All the strips are poorly drawn and the stories themselves are not particularly engrossing.

The other—better—book of the two contains articles on John Ockstra, The Cylons, *Battlestar Galactica*'s stars and on the spacecraft. Although very basic all are well illustrated with stills from the movie—there are some especially good shots of the hardware—and most are reproduced in colour.

Unfortunately, only 24 of the 96 pages are devoted to the film and the final result is the sort of book you would buy as a present for a 7 or 8 year old because you thought *Battlestar Galactica* was the "in-thing".

The format is that of a typical children's annual and I hope nobody buys this anticipating a "Battlerstar Galactic Official Collectors Edition".

AC

Published by Grandreams. 96 pages. £1.75.



OFFICIAL STAR TREK COOKING MANUAL by Mary Ann Piccard

Just when you think they've published nearly everything connected with Star Trek that it's possible to publish, along comes...

Within this collection of over 100 recipes are the favourite dishes of Kirk, Spock, McCoy and co together with some Vulcan, Romulan and Klingon meals.

If you're feeling up to it you can try the Klingon's Kiros Kai Faki-pig's feet and pea soup to you—or The Tribbles Banquet (Captain Kirk's chicken sandwich) or... but the list is endless. Tucked away at the back of the book are recipes selected by many of those connected with the series.

All in all the idea is pretty silly (crediting the original manuscript to Nurse Christine Chapel and claiming to have found it in a public library after it was thrown back through time doesn't help) and won't appeal to many who are not 100% ST Fans.

AC

Published by Bantam Books. 224 pages. 95p.

THE OTHER LOG OF PHILEAS FOGG by Philip Jose Farmer

In the past Mr Farmer has put pen to paper to prove that the tales of such characters as *Tarzan* and *Oz* were, in fact, thinly disguised accounts of the exploits of real people. Phileas Fogg is the latest victim of this quirk of his imagination.

To many the name will be familiar, for the less enlightened Phileas Fogg is the central character of Jules Verne's *Around The World In Eighty Days*.

According to the *Other Log*, which found its way into Mr Farmer's hands, the wager made at London's Reform Club was a red herring. The real reason

PHILIP JOSE FARMER THE OTHER LOG OF PHILEAS FOGG



for Fogg's race around the globe involves a war between two alien races that reside on Earth. Many of the incidents related by Jules Verne are expanded in this new book which gives an entirely different slant to an established classic.

However, this time around Philip Farmer has given his inventiveness too much rein and the new material does not merge successfully with the original novel.

AC

Published by Hamlyn Paperbacks. 176 pages. 80p.



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND: A DOCUMENT OF THE FILM Edited by Thomas Ourwood
Although an expensive book, the reproduction and quality make the price more reasonable.

Basically this is a collection of comments and observations from Spielberg, Trumbull, Orayus and many others who worked on the film. These undoubtedly contribute to the book but it is the photographs that have the most impact. Over 160 have been reproduced in full-colour including some that have not been published elsewhere. The format and the high quality printing combine to make *A Document of The Film* visually very attractive.

AC

Published by Avial Books. 12" 9". 144 Pages. Import. \$10.95.

THE AMERICAN VEIN by Christopher Wicking & Tise Vehimagi

The authors have both had a long-standing interest in American television and this, their first collaboration, is a review of the work of directors in that medium.

Over 280 directors are covered, grouped according to their achievements, with the productions they worked on and an assessment of their work.

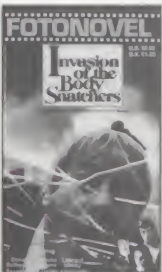


There is also a chronological history of American Television (from 1948) and a section covering the great TV shows.

An excellent reference book for those interested in this oft-ignored section of the media.

AC

Published by Talisman Books. 8 1/2" 6" 204 Pages. £7.50.



FOTONOVEL: INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS.

The Fotonovel format is intended to be a variation on and an alternative to the comic strip, and as such is fairly interesting. But as a replacement for the regular novel it is a poor substitute. The level on which this type of book excels is as a permanent record of a movie.

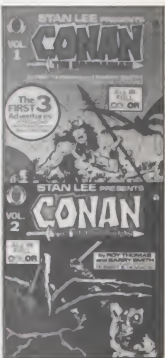
The *Invasion of The Body Snatchers* Fotonovel contains 350 full colour

still arranged in sequential order (obviously) and annotated with captions and lines of dialogue from the United Artists/Philip Kaufman movie forming, in effect, a profusely illustrated film script. However, since the captions and dialogue are rarely, if ever boxed off, the type is sometimes lost amid the detail of the photos, making the copy difficult to follow.

But despite the rather confusing layouts the book is an interesting addition to the collection of any film fan.

AM

Published by Fotonovel Publications. 188 Pages. £1.25.



CONAN THE BARBARIAN Volumes 1 & 2.

The only thing that is surprising about these two books is that it took Marvel so long to think of the idea. Conan has been a successful character in both paperback and comics for years. What better way to ensure success than to combine the two formats

Conan the Barbarian volume 1 contains the first three Marvel comics, written by Roy Thomas and drawn by British artist Barry Smith. Volume 2 contains, typically enough, the fourth, fifth and sixth comic books.

The books are well laid out, in full-colour, usually containing two frames per page, so that original comic book art is not crammed into the space of a pocket-book page as with earlier paperback adaptations of comics.

Considering that the first six American colour Conan comics would cost a collector somewhere around the £75 mark these books would be perfect for the casual collector who has neither the money nor the inclination to invest in the originals.

AM

Published by Ace Books. 160 pages. Import. \$1.95.

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Further to the feature on *Forbidden Planet* elsewhere this issue, *Starburst* presents a review of the only other science fiction film to showcase metallic star Robbie the Robot.

The Invisible Boy

by Tise Vahimagi

The story of *The Invisible Boy* revolved entirely around Robby the Robot, held over from MGM's lavish space-opera *Forbidden Planet* (see feature elsewhere this issue), which was released the previous year. The film is almost a Robby the Robot vehicle, and the mechanical character was presumably on Metro's roster of stars at the time.

Produced and written by the team—Nicholas Nayfack and Cyril Hume, respectively—from the earlier Metro picture, *The Invisible Boy* remains a lively and colourful film aimed specifically at the younger movie market. Directed by Herman Hoffman, who went on to helm tv's *The Untouchables*, *Bonanza*, and *The Virginian*, and later to receive writing credit on *Guns of the Magnificent Seven*, the film is less complex and "serious" than *Forbidden Planet* but contains many delightful moments that justify its own popularity.

Based on a story by Edmund Cooper, the film tells of ten-year-old Timmie, played by Richard Eyer (who later appeared as the genie in Columbia's *7th Voyage of Sinbad*), who is allowed to repair a disused robot by his scientist father, Dr Merrincoe (Phillip Abbott). The youngster discovers that the robot, Robby, contains a built-in conscience-mechanism and, wanting Robby to aid in playful mischief, Timmie removes the robot's "conscience" with the help of his father's invention, a super-electronic brain.

Unfortunately, a hostile alien force infiltrates the super-brain and when Dr Merrincoe requests information about a new satellite from the machine the alien force supplies the wrong data. The alien intends to acquire complete control of the brain and, as part of the strategy, issues orders for Robby to become hostile, kidnap Timmie, and place the boy onboard the satellite. Refusing to reveal the controlling numerical combinations of the



Opposite: The rare Australian "day-bill" poster for **The Invisible Boy** (1957). Below: Robbie faces destruction by a US Army flame-thrower.



Left: The invisible boy of the title (clearly visible here) tampers with Robbie's innards in an effort to remove the robot's mechanical conscience.



brain, Dr Merrincoe is unable to prevent the alien from firing the satellite into outer space.

Eventually, a counter-satellite is sent to retrieve both Timmie and the robot but, when they have been safely returned to Earth, Robby is ordered by the alien brain to destroy both the scientist and his son. But Robby, instead, destroys the evil brain, preventing anyone or anything from ever possessing such power again.

Though somewhat slow to start, **The Invisible Boy** picks up during the final half and develops into an enjoyable science-fantasy yarn. In order to validate the film's title, Timmie does become invisible for a very short time. Richard Eyer appears a little too knowledgeable for a boy his age, but is really no different from all the other

junior players in '50s sf movies: Jimmy Hunt in *Invaders from Mars*, Bobby Benson in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, Charles Herbert in *The Colossus of New York*, and the kids in *The Space Children*.

The famous Robby the Robot went on to appear again on television, and is featured in *The War of the Robots* segment of Irwin Allen's *Lost in Space* tele-series, first shown in 1966. *The War of the Robots* deals with a robotoid, Robby, which is repaired by Will Robinson, the young boy in the series, in somewhat the same fashion as Eyer in *The Invisible Boy*. This time, the evil robotoid is almost its own master and, once operating, decides to enslave Earth and destroy the opposition, the Robinson's own robot. The meeting between these two famous robots makes

a valid point in clarifying the popular belief that the *Lost in Space* series' robot was Robby the MGM robot.

The Invisible Boy (1957)

Richard Eyer (as *Timmie Merrincoe*), Phillip Abbott (*Dr Merrincoe*), with Diane Brewster, Harold J. Stone, Robert H. Harris, Dennis McCarthy, Gage Clark and Robby the Robot.

Directed by **Herman Hoffman**, Screenplay by **Cyril Hume** from a story by **Edmund Cooper**, Art Director **Merrill Pye**, Photographed by **Hilford Wellman**, Special effects by **Jack Rabin**, **Irving Block** and **Louis DeWitt**, Edited by **John Faure**, Music by **Les Baxter**, Produced by **Nicholas Nayfack**. A Pan/MGM Production.

Time: 89 mins

Cert: U



LORD of the RINGS - The Movie. See page 4.